WHICH WAY, SIRS, THE BETTER?

BY

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BEACON SERIES

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

PREFACE.

THE real story of the long-continued strike in the coke fields of Pennsylvania, and those later at Homestead and Buffalo, with their attendant sacrifice of life and property, and, if possible, the worse calamity of widening the breach between the laboring classes and the capitalist, has suggested to the writer the central thought of this short fiction. It is hoped that by the reading of the story the public mind may be brought to the study of a comparatively new solution of this great problem, and to a considerate answer to the query, "WHICH WAY, SIRS, THE BETTER?"

THE AUTHOR.

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WHICH WAY, SIRS, THE BETTER?

CHAPTER I.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

"No work yet, Michael?"

"No, Mary; the committee and Mr. Belden at their meeting this morning failed to agree, and from the present outlook the future is dark indeed for any speedy adjustment of differences."

"The Lord help us, Michael, for who but he can fill these hungry mouths unless soon this strike is ended," responded Mary, the tears welling up in her soft blue eyes, and trickling down her cheeks, as she looked down at the slumbering babe

on her knee, and at the boy of five, and the girl of three, that played about the open door.

"The Lord help us, Mary," answered Michael. "I have plead and urged a return to work, even at the reduction, until I am become an object of suspicion among the rest of the workmen, although, God knows, wages were low enough before, and I had hoped that the reduction would not long be insisted upon by Mr. Belden, and that we would not be idle more than a week or two at the furthest."

"Well, Michael," replied Mary, "I paid out our last dollar yesterday to the market-man, and this morning Mr. Jones, the grocer, told me that he thought he could no longer give us credit; that our bill now amounted to several dollars, and that he could no longer trust unless he could have some assurance of pay; that from appearances the strike

seemed no nearer settlement than it did a month ago. And then the coal is almost out, the days are growing colder, and the children are needing shoes and warmer clothing for the winter."

As these thoughts came into Mary's heart for utterance, her voice trembled and tears again filled her eyes.

"Cheer up, Mary; we must not allow ourselves to look so much on the dark side. Don't let us cross the bridge before we come to it. Brighter days are yet in store. Thank God, we have health and strength; this strike will soon go the way of all before it; besides, the other Unions urge us to hold out, and have promised us that if we stand firm they will see that we do not need for a sufficient support to keep the wolf from the door. Much as I dislike to accept aid from those who are as little able as myself, from their wage earnings, to give to others, yet if the

worst comes to the worst, it is an assurance, at least, that we shall not starve," replied Michael; and bending over, he imprinted a warm kiss on Mary's cheek, and lifting the babe from her knee, playfully tossed her aloft in his strong arms.

Michael Durant and Mary Daily, six years before the time of the above conversation, had joined heart and hand in the battle of life. Both of them were of that great middle class of Americans—if we may apply that foreign term of class distinction; their parents, being neither very rich nor very poor, were yet obliged to win their way in life by daily toil, and by the practice of the rules of strict economy. When Michael was a lad his father had died, and though possessed of a small farm, yet through a long and wearing sickness debts had accumulated, and when death came to the weary sufferer, the auctioneer stood ready, with his "going,

going, gone," to meet the demands of the waiting creditors. After these were satisfied, little remained for the widowed mother and orphaned children. The common schools of the country afforded Michael a rudimentary education, but at the age of fifteen his school days closed, and he sought employment in the iron mills of his neighboring county town, amid the dust and soot, the rush and roar of which he grew to man's estate with little money in his pockets, but with much muscle and a great power of endurance; a better capital on which to start life than dollars and cents.

It was in these years of early discipline that he met, wooed, and won Mary Daily, his equal in every respect. She was his junior only by a year or two, and like himself with no dowry save a sound constitution which blossomed out in rosy lips and laughing

eyes. After his marriage Michael went to Beldendale, one of those manufacturing villages so frequently found in the iron regions of Pennsylvania, west of the Alleghany mountains, and named for John Belden, the founder and proprietor of the large furnaces and rolling mills there located, in search of employment, which he readily found. After arranging for the occupancy of one of the numerous cottages erected on the lands of the proprietor of the works for the accommodation of his employés, he brought thither his young wife. The cottage was not large, but was large enough for two and with room to spare, having four rooms and a kitchen. It was one of a row of twenty-five or thirty others, all of the same architectural design, all painted the same color, and each having its little grass or flower plot in front and garden in the rear.

To repeat the experience of this

young couple would be but relating that of thousands of others similarly situated. Michael Durant went and came from his daily toil. Wages were fair and ample to meet the small necessities of the young housekeepers, so days, weeks, and months passed happily. Mary's whole ambition seemed to be, by tidiness and care, to make every nook and corner bright and pleasant for the homecoming of Michael. His dinner pail was always bright, and often, when at the noon hour the lid was removed, some little surprise in the culinary art awaited him, and when the whistle blew the quitting hour he hastened home, sure of a joyous welcome. Thus the years passed away and three little lives came to this happy home to fill fuller, if possible, their cup of joy. First Willie, the pride of his father, the autocrat of the house; then Mary, the personification of the mother; and last, but

not the least in the hearts and affections of the father and mother, baby Daise, whose cooings were yet a sealed language to the outside world, but in that family circle an open volume and read by all.

Six years passed and no cloud had for a moment darkened the home of Michael and Mary Durant. A little money, perhaps a hundred or two dollars, had in this time accumulated, carefully saved out of Michael's wages, and as carefully treasured "for a rainy day," or, as Mary often would say, "a nest egg for the roof that shall cover our own house." But now a day of darkening clouds had come, not only to the home of Michael and Mary, but to the whole population of Beldendale.

One morning in the latter part of August, 187—, as the men entered the furnaces and mills, placards met their eyes on every hand, posted conspicuously. Such a thing was

duction of ten per cent ; at least that is what the notice states."

"Do you know of any reason for this?" queried Mary.

"I only know this, that by the latest quotations of the iron market there is a decline in the prices of such products as are made in these mills. Money is a little close ; besides, by the failure of Scroggs & Co. and Anderson Bros., Mr. Belden has been delayed in collecting, if he has not lost, large bills due him by these firms. I know this from what I overheard at the office of the works yesterday in a conversation between two of the bookkeepers, and while I cannot well afford a reduction, yet I would rather suffer it than have the mills close at this season of the year. Mr. Belden has always, so far as I know, acted honorably with his workmen, and I do not think would require a reduction unless circumstances absolutely demanded it."

"These are just my thoughts," re-

plied Mary, "and I said as much to Mrs. Murphy, but I found she didn't agree with me. She colored up at once, and said, 'Old Belden,' as she called him, 'looks out for number one. What does he care for the like of us, only so long as we line his nest with silver and lay for him the golden egg. My Patrick will never consent, and I shall stand at his back as long as we have a cent in our pockets or a crust in the cupboard. It takes two to make a bargain, and the Union will have a word to say before the reduction.' She said she had seen nearly all the neighbors on the streets and they were all of her way of thinking. So you see, Michael, the matter may not be so easily settled as you think."

Michael was silent for a moment and then replied: "This is a proper subject for consideration by the Union. I suppose a meeting will be called and the matter talked over,

and I hope it will be satisfactorily adjusted. Mr. Belden, when he posted those notices, of course knew and expected the Union would consider the matter, and I for one hope that by September all will be right."

With this remark Michael rose from the supper table, put on his hat, took up the market basket, and started for the village to make some necessary purchases. As he walked along the village street, certain cabalistic signs appeared, here and there, chalked on sidewalks and fences, and known only to the initiated, but which, interpreted, gave notice to the members of Assembly No. 10 of the Knights of Labor that a meeting of special importance was called for that evening at eight o'clock sharp, for the consideration of important business.

Passing on down the street, Michael encountered here and there little knots of men standing on the street corners,

engaged in low but earnest consultation, and it was evident to the most casual observer that Beldendale was more deeply stirred on some question of importance to its interests than ever before in its history.

On coming opposite the open door of a low one-story wooden building, with gayly decorated front and broad windows, but so painted inside as to partially admit light, but at the same time prevent the curious outsider from seeing what might be going on within, and on which, in large letters, the public was informed that within was the saloon of Johannes Schlausser, where cold lunch and cool lager could always be had on demand.

Some one called from within, "Hoy, Moike!"

Looking around, Michael saw his neighbor, Patrick Murphy, coming toward him from the saloon counter, wiping with his shirt-sleeve the beer-froth from his lips.

"And how does yez loik auld Bilden's tin per cint squaze?"

"You mean the reduction," replied Michael.

"Faix, an' what ilse could I be afther namin' of it? I don't dignifoy it by the name of reduction; it sounds too raspictable; I call it squaze, for that's what it mains," answered Patrick.

"Well, I haven't had time to consider the matter fully. It is something to think about before making up one's mind."

"To think aboot, to consader? Faix, and in what condation is a mon to consader whin seein' he hasn't a cint in his pocket, a score against him at me friend's, Master Schlausser, and an impty mail barrel to home for Bridget and the childers. Why, mon, who can think and consader under such circumstances?"

"But, Patrick, every question, you know, has two sides to it, and

should not be decided too hastily," answered Michael, conciliatorily, seeing the rising ire of his excitable co-laborer.

"'Two soides to it.' Faix, to Paddy Murphy and Bridget a quistion of a tin per cint squaze by auld Bilden has but one soide, and that's the soide of Paddy and Bridget. But come, Moike, have a glass o' beer. My throat's dry as a whustle a considerin'."

"No, excuse me, Patrick, I never drink; besides I must do my marketing and hurry home so I may be in time to attend the meeting to-night," answered Michael, moving down the street.

"Yis, be sure and come to the matin'. Oy've been a seein' of the byes this afternoon, and they'll be a considerin' of auld Bilden's tin per cint squaze to-noight," replied Patrick, as he turned again to the counter and ordered another glass of beer, which

Mr. Schlausser promptly chalked down on a slate, kept always at hand as a convenient method of keeping accounts.

Michael Durant made his purchases, and then hastening home, told Mary of the meeting of the Union, and his purpose to attend. He also told her of his conversation with Patrick Murphy, and expressed a fear that the deliberations of the Union might not be characterized with that spirit of fairness and consideration of the rights of employer and employé that should govern such assemblies.

As Michael was about to leave for the meeting, Mary came to him, and taking his hands in hers, looked up into his face and said :

"Michael, I have so often read of strikes and lockouts, and of the awful sufferings they so frequently entail, that I cannot help being anxious about the result of your meet-

ing to-night. If these mills shut down, the little we have saved will soon be spent, and the home of our own that we have so often talked and planned about will be farther than ever from realization. I do so hope and pray that moderate counsels will prevail, that no rash step will be taken, and that this little cloud may soon pass away."

Looking down in her upturned eyes, Michael answered, "I fully see the danger ahead of us, and the difficulty of controlling an element in our Union which I very much fear is disposed to take the bit and carry matters to the extreme, but I assure you, by my love for you and these our children, that everything I can do will be done to prevent the closing of the mills." And passing his arm around her waist, he drew her close to him and, affectionately kissing her cheek, passed out into the gathering darkness,

and walked slowly and thoughtfully toward the place of meeting.

The street leading from his cottage to the main business thoroughfare of the village lay along the brow of a hill overlooking the river, along the margin of which the furnaces and mills had been erected. From this street, as he walked leisurely toward the village, Michael Durant had a magnificent night view of the works. From a hundred chimneys and furnace stacks dark columns of smoke rolled upward on the still August night winds, which, after rising a hundred feet or more above the works, like vast living spirals, united and spread out over the valley, enshrouding it with a thick canopy of motionless cloud. At intervals, brilliant tongues of flame, as the dampers were opened, shot skyward, tingeing for the time with their red glow the cloudy pillar, and which, being reflected back, threw

out, in sharp black lines, every object about the works. Although Michael had passed this way a thousand times, yet the scene below was so striking he stopped, looked, and listened. The throbbings of the mighty engines in their ceaseless pulsations were borne to his ears. The low hum of industry filled the whole valley, and the thought of the possibility that in a few days these engines might cease their throbbings, the ashes of these fires lie cold and dead on the furnace hearths, and all as the result of the action of the meeting toward which he was then bending his steps, weighed heavily on his heart.

CHAPTER II.

BELDENDALE'S PROPRIETOR.

JOHN BELDEN, the proprietor of the furnaces and mills, and the founder of Beldendale, was one of those phenomena of our modern American civilization that, like exotics in a congenial soil, spring up and soon outgrow and overtop all their fellows. In his early childhood his father was killed by an explosion in the rolling mills and nail factory of Roger Duncan, of Powhatan, Virginia, in one of the departments of which he, at that time, was superintendent. After the death of the father, Mrs. Belden continued to live at Powhatan, and at the early age of ten years her son John was employed in

the mills at picking up scrap and selecting nails—a common employment for children in those days. John was one of those precocious lads, quick to perceive and quick to execute, and did his work with such precision and care that he soon attracted the attention of Mr. Duncan, who daily visited each department of his works, not overlooking its smallest detail. On one occasion, while making his rounds, he stopped at the table where John, with deft hand and quick eye, was culling the defective nails from a quantity that lay before him, and for a moment watched the boy at his work. Placing his hand on his head, he kindly asked, "Can you read, my boy?"

"Yes, sir," answered John, looking up into his employer's face with frank and open countenance.

"Why, when did you go to school? you have been working here for a long time," replied Mr. Duncan.

"I never went to school; my mother taught me evenings after work hours."

"And who is your mother? And where is your father?"

"My mother is Mrs. Belden; we live on Pine street. My father is dead. He was killed by the explosion in this mill. His name was Robert Belden."

"Robert Belden, Robert Belden," repeated Mr. Duncan, hesitatingly, trying to gather up the threads of recollection. "Is it possible that you are the son of my old superintendent? Why, a better man than your father was never in my employ. After work hours come over to my office."

John worked on until the big bell rang out in cheerful notes the close of the working day (the modern steam whistle was as yet unknown), then washing his hands and face at the large wooden trough or "boish" used as a lavatory in the mill, and

taking his lunch basket on his arm, walked over to the general office of the works, wondering what Mr. Duncan wished to see him for.

The office consisted of two rooms; the front or main room was quite large and occupied by the clerks and bookkeeper of the works. The rear room was smaller, connecting with the front room by a door on which was a card with the warning words, "No admittance except on business." John entered the main room, and, with cap in hand, inquired of a clerk if Mr. Duncan was in.

"Yes, but he is busy and cannot be disturbed," answered the clerk without looking up.

John's courage almost failed him, but remembering the kind words of Mr. Duncan in the mill, he timorously ventured to say, "He told me to come and see him as soon as work hours were over, and I have come."

At this the clerk rose from his

desk, went to the door of the adjoining room, tapped lightly, and the voice of Mr. Duncan from within said, "Come."

Opening the door, the clerk said: "There is a boy here who says you told him to call."

"Show him in," replied Mr. Duncan, at which the clerk turned to John and bade him to enter, then closed the door and resumed his work at his desk.

The private office of Mr. Duncan was plainly furnished. A large safe stood at one end of the room, at the other a writing-desk, while along the wall were shelves arranged, on which were numerous specimens of iron ore, coal, and manufactured products. The floor was carpeted, and a few split-bottomed chairs completed the furnishing. No attempt at display was visible; the room, like its owner and occupant, was plain in the extreme.

Turning from his desk as John entered, Mr. Duncan bade him be seated, and said, "You say you can read?"

"Yes, sir," John replied.

"Read that," said Mr. Duncan, handing him a newspaper that lay on his desk, indicating a short paragraph. John took the paper and read the paragraph in a distinct and unhesitating voice. "Well done," said Mr. Duncan. "Can you write?"

"Yes, sir," replied John.

"Have you studied arithmetic?"

"Yes, sir; to the rule of three."

"And you never attended school, and have learned all this at home in the evenings?"

"Mother could not spare me to attend school, and said while I worked in the mill she would teach me of evenings."

"Well, would you like to go to school?"

"Oh, so much," answered the boy.

"Well," continued Mr. Duncan,

"I have watched you at your work, and have found you always punctual and careful. I want an office boy; that is, some one to come early in the mornings and tidy up the office, and keep it nice and clean; you will not need to be here later than half-past eight in the morning. I suppose your mother cannot spare your wages. Say to her I will pay you as much as you are now making, then you can go to school. You can return here after school hours and before the office closes, and do any little errands I may want you to do. How will that suit you, my young man?"

"Oh! I am so glad of your kind offer, and I know that my mother will feel very thankful. When shall I begin?"

"To-morrow, my boy, and now you can go." Mr. Duncan opened the door and as John passed into the outer room, he said to one of the clerks, "Robert, give this boy the

extra office key; he is to be our janitor."

As John hastened home his heart was light. It was his first recognition, and his foot unconsciously pressed the first round of the ladder by which he was destined to rise to prominence in the commercial world. In a few words he told his mother of his conversation with Mr. Duncan.

With eyes brimming with tears, the fond mother clasped her boy in her arms, and kissing him affectionately, said: "My boy, I thank God for this opportunity for you. I could not much longer be your teacher, as I have not the education to carry you farther in your studies, and I so longed that the way might, somehow, open that you could go to school; and now it has come. But, my dear boy, don't forget *how* it came. What is that text I have had you repeat to me so many times?"

"'Thou hast been faithful over a

few things, I will make thee ruler over many things,'" replied John.

"Yes, my son," answered his mother; "and the rule is just as truly God's rule in the business as in the moral world. It was your faithfulness in the little things about your employment that attached Mr. Duncan's attention, and now, as you go to the office and the school, keep ever in mind this rule of faithfulness and its rewards."

Early the next morning John was at the office, and by eight o'clock he had transformed the whole interior, and he could tell by the pleased expression of Mr. Duncan and the other occupants that his work was appreciated.

John entered the school of the Rev. Dr. Jason Matoon, who supplemented his meager salary as the pastor of the small Presbyterian congregation of the village and vicinity by teaching a private school for boys. His

progress was rapid in all his studies, especially in mathematics, and by his punctuality, diligent application, and quick perception, he soon won a high grade in his classes and a place in the esteem of his teacher.

Dr. Matoon was a Calvinist of the olden school. The fashions of the world might change, but he, never, either in his religious views or personal appearance. The knee-breeches, blue-cloth coat, powdered hair, and queue of years gone by, were still the only dress in which he thought a gentleman could becomingly appear, while theologically his feet were immovably planted on the doctrines of election, foreordination, and predestination; and to suggest in his presence any thoughts savoring of Arminianism—then a comparatively new doctrine in the country—was a challenge to intellectual battle. He mentally, and often publicly, applied his favorite doctrines to the men about

him and with whom he daily associated, and to the boys in the schoolroom. "God is the potter at his wheel," the old man used to say. "He maketh men, his vessels, as it pleaseth him, and for his own glory, and as in his own inscrutable wisdom seemeth good. One vessel he maketh to honor, another to dishonor; and shall the vessel say to the potter, why makest thou me thus?"

Although the doctor was a bluestocking of the deepest dye, and also quite blue-blooded, yet, withal, he was democratic in the extreme. The king on his throne or the lord in his palace might be the vessel of dishonor, while the poor cottager or the toiler in mill or mines might be the vessel of honor. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart," was the infallible standard by which he measured all his high thoughts of predestination, and beneath his stiff blue

coat lapel beat a true, a humble, and a tender heart. To the unruly boy of his school he was a mortal terror, yet never punishing unmercifully ; to the diligent and obedient he was as kind and tender as a mother.

In the old doctor's heart John Belden soon found a warm corner and became his particular favorite. He soon gathered the boy's history ; visited his mother, and learned from her the story of Mr. Duncan's kindness, and that it was through his favor that she was at all able to keep her boy in school. The doctor was quite intimate with Mr. Duncan ; both of them were Scotch-Irish, and consequently of very similar opinions on all questions, theological and political, and were often to be found in company. On such occasions Dr. Matoon would frequently refer in his conversation to the boys in his school, and speak quite freely of their merits and demerits. Indeed

he was quite sure that from the embryo boy he could with prophetic eye look down the line and tell his end from the beginning. The word accident had no place in his vocabulary; Providence was the substitute.

In one of these frequent conversations the doctor said: "Mr. Duncan, that boy, John Belden, is a prodigy, yes, a prodigy, a vessel made of extra good material. Why, you know when he entered my school? Well, he is outstripping every other boy in his classes, even those who are by several years his seniors. I tell you his future is worth keeping in view."

"Yes, I have not been an idle observer," replied Mr. Duncan. "What I like about the boy is that you never have to speak to him a second time, and I can trust him implicitly."

"Well, if I were a business man

as you are, I think I would, if possible, give the boy an opportunity."

"I have been thinking of that, although I have never spoken of it to anyone. I am getting on in years, and I find my business often a severe burden. I would so much like to have a little more relaxation, travel some, and live at my ease, but I have never yet found the person exactly to whom I could entrust all my interests, and John is out of the question on account of his youth; if he were older I might think of it."

"Let me suggest, my friend," replied the doctor, "something of which you perhaps have never thought, at least that you have never fully considered. Your life has been one of toil and care, yes, I may say of unremitting care, and it is doubtless becoming burdensome to you; but, my friend, a change of occupations often brings a relief more satisfying than a secession from all

care, and living, as you say, at your ease."

"Ah! you speak now in a riddle. Do you mean there is rest in labor? Please explain."

"Yes," replied the doctor, thoughtfully, speaking cautiously and weighing his words with care. "In a sense there is rest in a change of labor, but that is not exactly the thought I wish to convey. The laborer has always, or should have always, a purpose in view, something to be attained. It is when we pursue some object that our best efforts are put forth, else labor would be no more satisfying to us than to yonder ox that draws its burden only at the persuasion of the goad of its master. The ox is *driven;* man, intelligent, intellectual man, must be *drawn;* that's the difference. Mere physical ease to a man of your years and active business pursuits would not bring the rest you so much desire. What makes

your labor to-day a burden to you is that the object is attained, or at least you are so near the goal that you have lost your active interest. Rest will not come, my friend, by merely running away, by relaxation and idleness, but it will come by a change, or rather the substitution of a new object of pursuit."

"Why, doctor, you are quite a philosopher," jokingly replied Mr. Duncan; "but as I am a practical business man, please cannot you give me a practical illustration of your philosophy."

"Certainly, and I need no better subject for illustration than yourself. I have known you quite intimately for many years, and during all that time, to me it appears you have labored and economized, pursued one object—the acquirement of wealth. The goal of your ambition has been attained. Your labor now consists in hedging it about; the stimulus of

pursuit is gone, the labor grows heavier and more rasping each day; you long to run away to find rest somewhere. Mind, my friend, I am not saying this in censure. The acquirement of wealth is not necessarily wrong; I only speak of it as a fact. But now you want rest, relaxation. How can you obtain it? In idleness a man of your composition cannot find it; the only way is to set another object before you for attainment. Let that object be one less for self and more for the Master; one that will lift out of and above self, and bestow on others, and I assure you that the desired rest will come to you, and there will be a satisfaction in your labor that you have never dreamed possible."

The doctor had grown very much in earnest, had left his seat, and now stood holding his friend's hand firmly in his own.

"Yes, yes; I begin to see," an-

swered Mr. Duncan. "I have seen men of [illegible] vanced in years, who one would [illegible]se would be seeking rest and retirement, working with all the apparent earnestness of young manhood for the consummation of some philanthropic object, but I could never understand them; but I can see now, they were *drawn* not *driven.*"

"I am rejoiced you do see," responded the doctor. "And now, my dear friend, try my prescription, and I assure you that you will never regret it;" and warmly shaking his friend's hand, they separated.

Roger Duncan sat in his office for a long time meditating the words of the village pastor, and the more he thought of the "prescription," as the doctor termed it, the more he was convinced that it was the remedy he most needed. The words of the doctor, so warmly spoken, were too true, that all his life long it had been his absorbing ambition to accumu-

late, to be known as the richest man in the community. To this end he had exerted all his energies, had practised the strictest economy, and as a reward had seen from year to year his bank account increasing; and by the time he had passed his fiftieth birthday, and looked down the shadowy side of life, he was quoted and known as the wealthiest man of his state. But somehow, he could not tell why, there was not the satisfaction in his wealth that he had anticipated, and the wear and care of husbanding seemed tenfold greater than that of accumulating it. Often he was weary, lacking energy in his business, and he was unable to account for this on the theory of increasing years; it must be because his ambition had been attained, and that he now no longer pursued but possessed. The "irons in the fire" seemed to accumulate, and weariness and vexations multiplied about him.

With these thoughts coursing through his mind, there came clearly to him the parting words of his friend: "The only way is to set another object before you for attainment. Let that object be one less for self and more for the Master; one that will lift out of and above self, and bestow on others."

"Who will afford a better or more likely 'object' upon which to try the doctor's prescription than John Belden? For years he has served me faithfully, and the boy must be almost faultless, else Dr. Matoon would not be so lavish in his praises. In another two or three years of study and thorough business training, he will be equipped to assist me greatly in the management of my business."

Having reached this conclusion Mr. Duncan rose from his desk, put on his greatcoat, and prepared to leave his office for the day.

CHAPTER III.

CLIMBING UPWARD.

ALL the week following the conversation narrated in the preceding chapter, thoughts of and plans for his newly-adopted protégé haunted the mind of Roger Duncan. Indeed, he found a new and peculiar interest, a very fascination, in these thoughts and plans, and the old familiar friend that by chance might have met him as he walked the streets could not have failed to notice a quickened step and a more erect carriage than had been observable for many months. It was but the working of the new leaven. Again he was in pursuit, and the object of his pursuit was a higher and nobler one than had ever before engrossed his thoughts.

Oh! the uplifting power of a noble purpose, who can measure it? Such purposes have made the world's heroes, and will so continue to do until the end of time. There was one thought, however, that would intrude itself upon Mr. Duncan's mind, and that tended to mar these pleasant reveries. That was, what would the boy's mother say? Would she consent to all his plans? And if she were dependent upon his wages, how was the question to be disposed of successfully of making provision for her? Mr. Duncan was a bachelor, and to him woman's ways were an unsolved mystery. He could deal with men, but this was the first time in his business career he had had to deal with a woman, and that, too, on that delicate of all questions of supplementing her support without a consideration. It was an awkward problem and one not easy of solution. But Mr. Duncan was a man "set in

his way," and when he had once "purposed in his heart" no obstacle was insurmountable.

In this dilemma he did not think of his friend, Dr. Matoon, as a capable adviser. He determined to see Mrs. Belden in person, and know fully her wishes concerning his intended purposes toward her son. Brushing his hat and clothes with more than ordinary care, he sought her home.

The house occupied by her was an unpretentious, one-story cottage, standing some distance from the main thoroughfare on one of the side streets, surrounded by other houses of similar design, and occupied chiefly by operatives employed in the mills. On entering the gate of the small front yard he marked the evidences of taste and refinement of the occupant. The walk to the front door and doorsteps were scrupulously clean, and the vines and shrubbery had been trimmed and trained with

the greatest care. Knocking at the door, he was received by a lady, plainly but neatly dressed, whose broad forehead and large expressive gray eyes indicated a person of more than ordinary intelligence and refinement.

"Is this the home of Mrs. Belden?" he inquired.

"It is. Will you please walk in?" Mrs. Belden replied; and bidding the visitor be seated, she said: "Mr. Duncan, I believe. I have frequently seen you on the street, but have never had the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"Yes," answered Mr. Duncan, taking the proffered seat, "and you will please pardon this intrusion, but I have called this morning to talk over with you matters pertaining to your son, and which, if agreeable to you, may, I trust, be a great benefit and advantage to him in coming years."

"I am certainly under great obligations to you, Mr. Duncan," replied Mrs. Belden, "for what you have already done for my son, and if deserving of your continued favors I shall only be too happy."

Mr. Duncan then proceeded to unfold to Mrs. Belden his plans and purposes concerning the education of her son, to all of which she listened with a mother's interest. "And now," said he, "I only wait your approval."

Mrs. Belden sat, intently gazing into the fire. A conflict was evidently being waged in her mind, in the decision of which her whole being was absorbed. At length she answered: "Mr. Duncan, I certainly appreciate your great interest in the future welfare of my son. You have already placed me under obligations to you, but for personal reasons I cannot see my way clear to accept your very kind offer."

"Certainly, Mrs. Belden, personal reasons must be very strong that would lead you to reject my proposition. Pray, if I do not intrude, tell me these reasons; they may be such as can be overcome."

"I have no reason particularly to conceal them, Mr. Duncan; my poverty alone is the reason. My health is such that I have to carefully husband every resource to meet my ordinary expenses, and I find myself almost entirely dependent upon the wages of my son for support, and much as I should like to accept your kind offer to aid him to a more liberal education, I feel I cannot do so."

Mr. Duncan reflected a moment. As has been said, he was a man not easily swerved from a purpose.

"Mrs. Belden," he replied, "the matter of your boy's wages need not stand in the way. I will continue his wages during his absence, so

there need be no hesitation on that account."

"Thank you, Mr. Duncan; much as I appreciate your honorable intentions, I could not accept for myself, even for my son's sake and in his name, a gratuity."

"Beg pardon, madam; I do not wish to urge, but may I not pay the salary as an advancement rather than a gratuity? I expect your son, when he has completed his education, to be again in my employ, and that at such a salary that his present wages will be but a bagatelle to repay."

"You certainly place me under great obligations, Mr. Duncan," began Mrs. Belden.

"No obligations, no obligations whatever," replied Mr. Duncan, following up his apparent advantage. "All I ask is that I may do for your son as I would do were he my own; and I can trust him so implicitly that if his health and life be spared, any

little advancements that I may make him now I know will be fully repaid; and if these are not spared him, there shall be no after obligations, I assure you."

The end of it all was that Mrs. Belden yielded to the importunity of Mr. Duncan, and in due time John was sent to Benville College, entering the Junior class, from which in three years he graduated with the highest honors.

Did we say "the end of it all"? No, not all. John's name was continued as an employé on the books of the Duncan Iron Works. Punctually, as the other employés were paid, his wages were sent to his mother, and duly charged to his account. Mrs. Belden rejoiced in the future prospects of her son. To say she was proud of him, as each vacation he returned home to spend the days, looking more manly and noble, could but faintly express the fond mother's

feelings. Mr. Duncan also took a special delight in the monthly reports of his progress, sent him by prearrangement with the president of the college, and with a sense of keenest pleasure he drew the checks and made remittances that met all expenses.

Thus two hearts were centered on a common object. It is a law of physics that two bodies tending toward a common center must meet. Metaphysically, does not the same law govern? The bachelor quarters of Mr. Duncan began soon to be too narrow and straitened. His only confidant had been his friend, Dr. Matoon, but now he did not fully confide all to him. It was no more than natural that, when by chance he and Mrs. Belden met, they would interchange views as to the progress John was making in his studies, and that letters received by Mr. Duncan from him were regularly sent to the

cottage of Mrs. Belden; and what he said, and what he was doing, were common subjects of conversation. Occasionally the boy's wants were such as absolutely required the consultation of the mother and his benefactor, and at such times Mr. Duncan would be compelled to seek the cottage of the mother. As time passed, these visits became more and more frequent, and it was evident that the interests of the absent schoolboy were not always their real, though excusable, cause. Mr. Duncan would hardly have admitted any other cause, had he been questioned, though deep in his heart he had a consciousness of a pleasure while in the presence of Mrs. Belden, at her cosy, vine-covered cottage, that he would admit to himself he did not enjoy in the solitude of his own rooms at the village hotel.

Time passed rapidly and soon brought to John Belden the closing

month of his senior year at Benville College. His three years of college life had wonderfully transformed him; from the awkward boy he had developed into manhood, and now with a mind well stored with college lore, he was about to make his debut into the more active duties of a business life.

Commencement day, the day of all days to the college boy, at length dawned at Benville, and the people of the surrounding country came by carriage, cart, and horseback to witness the closing exercises upon the college campus. The class historian read his eulogies, the class prophet painted in glowing colors the future of his co-graduates, and the campus rang with the sententious voice of the valedictorian. For none of these much-coveted places of commencement-day honors was young Belden an aspirant; his mind was of a more practical turn, and in his class exer-

cises, especially those pertaining to the sciences, he was the winner of the chief honors. Dr. Matoon, Mr. Duncan, and Mrs. Belden were all intensely interested spectators. The thesis of John Belden was geological and treated of the coal and ore deposits of the Blue Ridge and Alleghany ranges, and his treatment of his subject showed his research and thorough familiarity with his theme; and as he pictured the future possibility of wealth and empire buried beneath these mountain-ranges and their foot-hills, and only waiting the pick and shovel of the miner, and the smelting furnaces and mills of the manufacturer, to cause the intervening valleys to teem with a prosperous population, the audience rose with one accord and cheered the youthful speaker.

Dr. Matoon, under the stimulus of the enthusiastic plaudits, turned to Mr. Duncan and clasping his hand

exclaimed: "Didn't I tell you that boy was made of no ordinary clay?"

After these exercises came the distribution of diplomas and conferring of honors, and then amid the din of college songs and class cheers the throng of students and spectators dispersed, while the immediate friends of the several graduates pressed forward to the platform to bestow their congratulations. The first to clasp John's hand was his old teacher, Dr. Matoon, who warmly congratulated him, then Mr. Duncan, and last his mother, who with tears, threw her arms about his neck and kissed him tenderly.

A few days after their return home Mr. Duncan sent a note to John requesting an interview at his office. Promptly at the hour appointed John entered the office and was ushered into Mr. Duncan's private room. As he entered Mr. Duncan warmly greeted him, and

after a few preliminary inquiries said jocosely: "Well, John, now that you are through college, I suppose you would like some light employment, just something to employ the mind and keep away the blues."

"I certainly shall be pleased to engage at anything that will enable me, as soon as possible, to cancel my obligations to you for the great favors you have shown me."

"Don't let that little matter disturb you, John, although I know it is more desirable to be a creditor than a debtor; but I hardly think your muscle is quite sufficient to undertake the running of a pair of rolls."

"I am ready for anything; muscle will develop with the using."

"Well, my nose has been kept pretty close to the grindstone for years, and I am somewhat seriously considering the advisability of a foreign trip for a little recreation,

and in that case I will stand in need of some one to take a superintendency of my interests while absent, and I thought probably you could fill the place."

John opened his eyes in amazement. Mr. Duncan, seeing his astonishment, went on: "What do young men go to college for? Why for years cram themselves with Latin, Greek, mathematics, and natural sciences unless it be of some future benefit, unless the theories then learned are intended in after years to be practically applied? Come, my boy, don't hesitate. I have confidence that you can soon master all the intricacies of my business. Had I not had that confidence even four years ago, I doubt if ever you would have seen Benville."

"With your assistance, Mr. Duncan, I can try, and I trust your confidence in me will not be too severely tried."

"All right, when will you begin; say to-morrow? But what of your salary?"

"That I shall be pleased to leave to your generosity."

"My generosity! That will never do in this business world."

"Well, say two thousand," replied John with doubtful air.

"Call it three," responded Duncan, briskly, "and in addition the cancellation of your indebtedness, and I think if you find the worry and care equal to what I have experienced in the years past, the place will not prove a sinecure or the salary too large."

Almost dazed with his good fortune, John left the office with a bounding heart and walked homeward.

Mr. Duncan wheeled on his heel, and laughing to himself, said: "I've given the boy his first lesson, something he never would have learned at Benville; as yet he is as green as

grass, but the brains in that cranium, after a little practice, will be well worth the salary."

John could hardly keep a moderate pace on his way homeward. Flushed with excitement, he rushed into the room where his mother sat quietly engaged at sewing. Startled by the abrupt entrance and excited manner of her son, she exclaimed:

"Why, John, what has happened? what has come over you?"

"Happened! come over me!" he answered, panting for breath. "Why, mother, I don't know whether I've been struck by lightning or what has happened. I only know that such a streak of good fortune has hit me that I hardly know whether I am John Belden or some other body."

"Well, I guess you are John Belden yet; but sit down and tell me all about it," replied his mother cheerily."

"Well, mother, don't think me gone daft," John answered, as he dropped into the most convenient chair. "But when a boy like me, that never rubbed one dollar against another that he could call his own, is offered a three-thousand-dollar salary, isn't it enough to drive him distracted?"

"A three-thousand-dollar salary!" exclaimed Mrs. Belden, dropping her sewing. "Why, have you lost your reason, John?"

"No, mother, it's a veritable fact, and in addition to that my indebtedness to Mr. Duncan for college expenses is all cancelled;" and in the exuberance of his joy he seized his mother, lifted her from her chair, and wheeled her about the room as though she were a girl of sixteen.

"Stop, stop, John, you will ruin my sewing! There, my naughty boy, you have scattered it all over the floor. Now just be quiet and help

me gather up these goods, and in the meantime tell me who is my boy's benefactor now?"

"Oh, who cares for goods, mother?" he laughingly replied.

"John, remember, 'He that is faithful over a few things shall be made ruler over many things.' If anyone has offered you such a splendid salary, it is because he has observed your faithfulness, and not otherwise. But you have not answered my question," soberly replied his mother.

"Well, mother, it is Mr. Duncan; he sent for me to-day, and said he wanted to take a trip abroad—I suppose to Europe; and he wanted some one to take charge of his business during his absence, and insisted that I should accept the situation. I enter on my duties to-morrow."

As John, in his excited mood, rattled on in the conversation, he did not notice that his mother bent her

head low over her sewing to conceal the blushes that tinged her cheeks.

The village gossip had not yet come to the ears of John of the intimacy of Mr. Duncan and his mother. In reply, and without lifting her eyes from her sewing, Mrs. Belden said: "I am so glad, John, and if you are only as faithful in your new and more important duties as you have heretofore been, I feel confident that you will not disappoint your employer."

"How exceedingly cool you are, mother! just as though three-thousand-dollar salaries grew like apples on trees and were to be had for the picking."

"I do indeed rejoice with you, John, but in days of adversity I learned to say with Job, 'The Lord taketh away,' and now in prosperity shall I not say, 'The Lord giveth'? and at all times and under all cir-

cumstances submissively say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord'?"

John took her face between his hands, caressingly, and stooping over her kissed her tenderly and said: "Yea, thrice blessed is the son that hath such a mother."

CHAPTER IV.

ORANGE BLOSSOMS.

THE unpretentious Presbyterian church of Powhatan village, with its straight-backed pews and high and unornamented pulpit, presented quite a gala appearance on the morning of October 1, 18—. The old colored sexton had made more than ordinary exertion to remove the accumulated dust and cobwebs, and bustled about as fast as his rheumatic legs would permit, arranging the ferns and potted plants in tasteful decoration that had been brought from the greenhouses of the not distant city. The village urchins, attracted by such an extraordinary proceeding, gathered about the open door with

wide-open eyes and mouths, and even invaded the sacred precincts, to the great annoyance of old Pompey, the sexton, who, with uplifted broom, advanced upon them, exclaiming :

"Now, you'ns jis' go 'way from hyar, or I'se tell Mars' Duncan as how you'ns s'iles des' yer steps wid yes dirty feet, and sp'ils Misses' nice clo's when she comes in dis yer chu'ch ; now, go 'way, I'se tell yer !" at which demonstration of subduing wrath against infantile disobedience, every imp would disappear around the corners, and old Pompey would return to his sweeping and dusting with increased energy, muttering maledictions on "Des' 'ar pesky chil'in desicatin' de Lo'd's house dat a-way."

Promptly at eleven o'clock the ushers stood at the open church doors, awaiting the invited guests, who, soon beginning to arrive, were by them escorted to their seats.

Promptly at twelve o'clock the carriage of Mr. Duncan came, followed closely by another, in which were seated Mrs. Belden and her son. Alighting, Mr. Duncan and his groomsman entered the church and walked up the right aisle, while Mrs. Belden, leaning on the arm of her son, passed up the left, meeting at the pulpit, in front of which Dr. Matoon stood in waiting. No organ pealed forth the wedding march. The time was at a date when instruments of music had not invaded the Presbyterian churches to any great extent outside of the cities; and, as Dr. Matoon still entertained some qualms of conscience on the subject of instrumental music in church services, no one had as yet the hardihood to break through this barrier of Scotch positiveness, although the Psalms of David, by Rouse, had to some extent given place to the more rhythmatic songs of Watt.

With great solemnity the doctor expounded the nature and obligations of the compact into which the parties before him were about to enter, and then gravely asked the questions and pronounced the words that made Roger Duncan and Mary Belden husband and wife. Then clasping their joined hands in his palms he lifted his eyes and reverently and fervently invoked heaven's richest blessing upon the union there consummated.

At the close of the simple ceremony, and after receiving the congratulations of the invited friends present, Roger Duncan and his wife entered the waiting carriage and were driven to the city of Richmond, where they embarked on one of the primitive river steamers that in those days plied between that city and the greater ocean ports. John Belden accompanied them to the wharf, and as the little steamer, with much

puffing, backed out into the river and then headed toward the Atlantic, he waved his mother and foster-father and friend a parting adieu, and, until shut from view by a bend in the river, he stood watching the little craft with its precious freight.

Roger Duncan was now fully launched on his long-contemplated voyage, and John Belden, young in years, but well equipped for his duties, was sole manager of all his estates. Returning to the mills, he at once entered upon the duties of the management and threw into his work all the energy of his young manhood. With the other employés he was on most familiar terms. Many of them had known him from childhood, and held in grateful memory their old superintendent, his father. He studied incessantly, and soon was familiar with every detail of his work.

The products of the furnaces and

mills were as carefully wrought and marketed as they could have been under the experienced administrative hand of their owner. Days, weeks, and months passed, and were rapidly lengthening into a year, and Roger Duncan's honeymoon had not waned, nor the pleasurable enjoyment of sight-seeing in the gay, somber, or weird cities of the old world lessened. Being a business man and all his life long an employer of labor, he visited the principal manufacturing centers of France and Germany, examining with great care the various methods of employment of laborers and the condition of the employed. At Belaire, in France, he was wonderfully impressed with the results of the system of employment of operatives in the manufacturing establishment of M. Beauchereau.

The streets of unpretentious but neat and tidy homes ; the happy and contented occupants ; the industry

and thrift of the employed ; the order, neatness, and care displayed in and about the vast workshops made a deep impression upon his mind, and he resolved, by a personal interview with the proprietor, to know fully his methods and the history of his wonderful success.

Calling at the office of the works, he was cordially received by M. Beauchereau, who, extending his hand in welcome and bidding his visitor be seated, said :

"I had been informed that an American manufacturer of your name was stopping at the St. Cloud, and I have very much desired your acquaintance. Of late I have been much interested in your country, having read several articles in the *Trade Review* on your manufacturing industries and your wonderful mineral resources."

"And I, too, have been very much interested in those of your country,"

replied Mr. Duncan, "and particularly in your own establishments, and have called this morning, not only to make your acquaintance, but to learn from you the history of your methods of employment of operatives."

"The operatives in these works I hardly regard in the light of mere employés," remarked M. Beauchereau in reply, "but rather *quasi*-partners, as each operative is a profit-sharer, and, in case of losses, a sharer in those as well."

"Ah, I comprehend. Your works are conducted on the co-operative principle."

"Not exactly, and yet largely so, the difference mainly being that the absolute title to all the property remains in me; also the exclusive management and superintendency. This is not the case, as you know, in a purely co-operative concern."

"Your arrangement is quite novel.

Will you kindly give me the history of it—how you came to devise the system, and the plan in detail?"

"Certainly, with pleasure. The system is not original with me, at least not altogether so. Other manufacturers, both in France and Germany, had, to some extent, tried the experiment of distribution of profits among their workmen, and always with happy results. As to its history, in so far as it applies to my works, that can be easily and quickly told. I was a manufacturer having in my employ many people, and, of course, as all manufacturers can testify from their own personal experience, I was harassed and perplexed with strikes and the thousand other annoyances of the employer's life, not least among which was the constant changing (going and coming) of operators. Then there was the carelessness and lack of interest so common in great workshops like these,

often entailing considerable loss. I was impressed, in consequence, with the thought that some system could be devised that would to a great extent obviate most of these evils. My first thought was: How can these people be so interested in their work that there shall be more stability and less carelessness? I did not favor the plan of co-operation. In that there are too many heads, each co-operator having an equal voice in the management. A workshop is much like a ship at sea. One man, tried and competent, must have absolute control, else she will founder or sink upon the rocks. Again, the co-operative plan would involve the turning over of the property to the co-operators, and that was not to be considered, for, as you know, laboring men as a rule are without capital other than their labor."

"How do you settle the question of profits?" asked Mr. Duncan.

"A division of profits, or as we term it, profit-sharing, it seemed to me, would best meet all these difficulties and not have the disadvantages I have mentioned incident to co-operation, and after careful consideration by myself and employés, was put upon trial, with the results you see. The plan adopted was, in brief, this: I owned the works, estimated value so much. Upon the invested capital it was agreed that I was entitled to a reasonable interest, say the same interest allowed upon government securities. For my services for management of the works I was allowed a reasonable salary; a scale of wages to each operative was agreed upon, both salary and wages to be paid semi-monthly. At the expiration of each quarter (three months) the books were balanced, and any profits remaining, after deducting interest on capital, salary, wages, and necessary repairs to the

works, was divided into three equal parts. One of these thirds was set apart as a contingent fund to meet any possible losses or reverses in conducting the business, in addition to repair account; one-third was distributed *pro rata* among the operatives on the basis of their wage scale; and the remaining third was my share of the profits. This agreement was entered into for one year as an experiment, and so good were the practical results that it has been continued without interruption, and I know of none who desire to abandon it and return to the wage system of former times."

"I am indeed much interested in what you have told me, M. Beauchereau," said Mr. Duncan, "and now I would be pleased to know the particular moral effects of your plan, if any, upon the operatives."

"The moral effect has been excellent, better than I even dared hope

for. The operatives seemed to comprehend fully their responsibility, and were stimulated to the exercise of greater carefulness in the use of material and machinery, and to avoiding loss of time. In these three respects I am confident that at least ten per cent was added to our profits. These I regard as moral results, for whatever will lead men to consider, is moral. And then, on the higher plane, intemperance is almost unknown, for the sober and industrious will not long tolerate an operative who wastes his time and energies in the debauch."

"Have you had occasion to overdraw your reserve fund at any time?" queried Mr. Duncan.

"The third set apart as a reserve has proved amply sufficient to meet all contingencies. Indeed, during a period of five years of continuous profit-making, we have found it advisable to fix a maximum limit to

that fund and declare an extra dividend."

"Are the operatives disposed to acquire property—own their homes?"

"Most of them now are owners of their homes. I have encouraged them to this step, knowing the advantage, both to myself and them, of their so doing. Chiefly they have purchased on the instalment plan of small monthly or quarterly payments. This has enabled them, out of their savings, in a few years to acquire a title to their homes in fee, and has contributed very much to their benefit in every way, for the man that owns in his own right a plot of ground, however small, is, you know, just that much more a man. There is nothing, outside of religion, that so uplifts and ennobles a man as the possession of property."

"I certainly have been very much entertained and instructed by what you have said, and shall not soon for-

get your kindness in giving your valuable time to make this explanation to me. I leave for Paris to-morrow, and will soon sail for America, and shall always recur to this interview with great pleasure," said Mr. Duncan, rising to go.

"I am only too sorry that your visit is so short. I should be delighted if you could prolong it, and would have been pleased to have heard from you something more of your wonderful country. But I hope this will not be your last visit to our beautiful France, and that we shall meet again," answered M. Beauchereau, and, bowing Mr. Duncan to the door, bade him adieu.

CHAPTER V.

FIRE, SMOKE, AND ASHES.

It was after twelve o'clock on a cold December night. The loud and rapid clanging of the mill bell, the hurrying feet of belated villagers along the dark and uneven streets, and the shrill cry of "Fire! Fire!" awakened the citizens of Powhatan, and brought them to the doors and windows of every residence and cottage of the village. The scene that met their startled gaze was one of magnificent grandeur. The whole heavens were illuminated, and the scurrying winter clouds, driven by the fitful gusts of wind across the sky, reflected back the glow of the flames that,

amid upward rolling clouds of densest smoke, leaped heavenward. That a fire of no ordinary proportions was in full progress was apparent to everyone, and soon it was well known to all that the mills and shops of the Duncan Iron Works were rapidly succumbing to the fiery element.

Men of all stations rushed from their homes half clad and hurried to the mills to render what assistance they could to stay the flames, while women and children, helpless, pale, and shivering, stood waiting in the cold night air. Willing hands worked manfully on the old and creaking hand-engine, while others carried water in whatever vessels came to hand ; but all to no purpose. The huge timbers that supported the structure soon yielded to the devouring flames, and, tottering, bending, fell, bearing with them girders, rafters, and roof, into the seething furnace of fire beneath.

Seeing that no headway was being made in staying the flames, the men, one by one, ceased their efforts and stood about thoughtful, silent, and grave, viewing this holocaust of their hopes of daily bread. Lower and lower the fire burned, revealing by the dull glow and fitful flashes, the towering chimneys, the only standing monuments of the Duncan Iron Works, while at their bases, warped and twisted by the intense heat, lay the débris of unfinished work, tools, and machinery.

At the first alarm John Belden rushed to the office, then in flames, and amid a shower of falling sparks and cinders, burst open the doors, collected all the important books and papers and had them carried to a place of safety. It was but the work of a few moments, and an instant afterwards the building swayed and toppled to the ground, a mass of hissing embers.

The morning dawned, leaden and cold, in fitting harmony with the hearts of the army of workingmen and their wives and children. The mills in which they had toiled and earned their daily bread, and from which they hoped for their future support, lay before their eyes a blackened, ruined mass of smoldering débris. To the proprietor, with the insurance policies, wherefrom he might hope for at least a partial return of his losses, the burning of his mills might not be accounted a great calamity; but to the laborer and his family, wholly dependent on his daily toil, it was indeed an irreparable loss, for whither should he turn for a new field of labor and sustenance for those dependent ones? Well might Nero, the cruel and profligate, fiddle with complacency at the burning of his palaces. These were his toys; but to the toiling plebeian, the destruction of his cot, which stood in the palatial

shadows, was the loss of his all. And yet how often and how heroically and uncomplainingly are these disasters borne by the great mass of laborers who throng our workshops, and of whom few take account, lavishing instead their sympathies upon the wealthier proprietors.

It was apparent that nothing remained to be done by the young superintendent except gather from the ruins the scrap, make the proper proofs of loss to the insurance companies, pay the employés their wages, communicate with Mr. Duncan, who was still abroad, and abide his instructions. In those days of slow stage-coaching, inferior rail service, slower sailing vessels, or at best the embryo steamships, communication by letter required time. There were no cable lines for the rapid transmission of news, no fast mail service that by rail and White Star lines would bear the news within a week to yonder dis-

tant shores. There was nothing to be done, however great the emergency, but to sit with folded hands and wait, *wait*.

Week after week passed, and no tidings from Mr. Duncan. Daily the lumbering stage-coach crept up the steep village street, stopped at the post-office, and discharged its sack of meager mail. The driver, perched on the lofty seat with whip in hand, gossiped with the usual crowd that stood or sat listlessly about the village tavern door, of the latest city news, or cracked with them his latest joke while waiting the changing of the mail. At length the postmaster, that chief functionary of every village cross-roads, would come out with the slender sack and carelessly cast it on the footboard, then Jehu, drawing tautly the slackened rains and cracking his whip over the leaders' heads, would go lumbering down the stony street, and the villagers would again

relapse into their accustomed state of inertia.

John Belden was always first at the post-office, but to the eager inquiry for news from Mr. Duncan by the bystanders his reply was invariably "No word." But as there must be an end to all things, so to this waiting. The stage at last brought a letter from Mr. Duncan, but, alas! not encouraging to the citizens of Powhatan. It ran as follows:

"Paris, January 10, 18—

"MY DEAR JOHN:

"Your letter informing me of the destruction by fire of the works just received. I do not mourn the loss. The machinery was much worn and not modern. The facilities for transportation are very insufficient in these days of sharp competition. I shall never rebuild at the old site. Please collect insurance, gather and sell the scrap as best you can, close up all business transactions, and wait my return. Yours cordially,

"ROGER DUNCAN."

The announcement of the contents of this letter was the death-knell of the village. Nothing remained for the workmen to do but to seek other places of employment. Merchants closed out their stocks, and sought other fields more inviting.

A few years wrought a wonderful change in the village. Weather-beaten, dilapidated, and untenanted houses and decay everywhere; a few mouldering bricks and piles of stone and rubbish, partly concealed with rankly-growing weeds, marked the site of the once prosperous Duncan Iron Works. Who in traveling through the country has not seen such sights? A turn of the wheel of fortune, just such as we have described, has blasted the future or stimulated the development of many an embyro city; has multiplied a hundredfold, or wrecked, many a promising investment.

CHAPTER VI.

RESURRECTION.

In the month of May following the burning of the mills, Mr. Duncan and his wife returned to New York. John Belden was on the wharf to meet and welcome them. Upon landing they were at once driven to the St. Nicholas Hotel, where suites of rooms had been engaged, and where in privacy they could talk over the scenes and incidents of their journey, and their plans for the future, without molestation by inquisitive neighbors.

After a few days of pleasant intercourse, rest, and recuperation from the fatigue of their sea-voyage, Mr. Duncan said to John: "I think I

shall make this city, or some place conveniently near, my future home. My life is well advanced, I have a competency, and I do not desire again to enter into the activities of a business life; and yet I do not wish to be wholly idle; just enough business to afford me a stimulus is all I wish; but as for you, I very much wish to know your plans for the future, if you have thought of any."

"Of course I have thought much of what I should do, or rather of what I should wish to do, since the burning of the mills. There is book-keeping. I understand that, also engineering and surveying to some extent; but I would prefer a position as manager of iron works," replied John.

"The successful manner in which you managed my works convinces me of your ability to conduct a similar business on a much more

extensive scale," answered Mr. Duncan, "and I have thought that an investment of a part of my capital in an enterprise of that character, with you as the active partner and in charge, would be likely to prove a profitable undertaking, provided a proper location could be secured."

"I have in mind just such a location," said John. "In one of our engineering expeditions, while in college, into the mountain regions of Pennsylvania, I came upon it; since that time parties have partially developed the mines, and the work has sufficiently progressed to demonstrate the quality and quantity of coal and ore; and the facilities for shipping, both by rail and water, are excellent."

"Give the matter your earliest attention, then," replied Mr. Duncan. "When can you go?"

"I am at liberty to go at any time."

"Then make your preparations and go at once, and if you find everything suitable, purchase; but remember, my name, under no circumstances, is to be known in the enterprise."

From this and similar conversations and consultations and action thereon, in the narration of which the reader would have little interest, sprang the great steel and iron plant of John Belden and the prosperous and growing town of Beldendale, the scene of the opening chapter of this story.

One incident in this history of the early life of John Belden must not be omitted. During the absence of Mr. and Mrs. Duncan in Europe, a pair of kindly eyes had looked lovingly into his, and his heart had as lovingly and tenderly responded; and soon after his establishment in Beldendale a young bride came to grace the new home of the popular proprietor, and around his hearth-

stone came, in the passing years of unalloyed happiness, four treasures of their love to entwine their hearts and cement their affections in advancing years—two girls and two boys—"an even divide," John playfully remarked. And indeed a happier home, supplied with every convenience and luxury that wealth could command, could not be found in all the country. It was the admiration of all, the pride of the well-wishing villager, and alas ! too, the envy of the vicious and depraved.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING OF THE KNIGHTS.

When Michael Durant ascended the stairs leading to the hall, the place of meeting of Assembly No. 10, he found it already packed to suffocation, and elbowing his way through the crowd he took a position near the seat of the presiding officer, that he might the more carefully note all that passed. Let us look for a moment into the faces of the men composing the assembly. Some are respectably and cleanly clad; others are in shirt sleeves, and without evidence of change of garments from the workshop; some are washed and shaven; others are as grim and sooted

as when they left the mills and forges; some are grave, sober, and thoughtful; others are flushed, excited, and even boisterous; some bear evidences of no mean order of intelligence, scholarship, and refinement; others are brutish, ignorant, and uncouth. Here is the native American, the Irishman, German, and Swede, with here and there a Hungarian and a dark son of Italy—a strange medley of humanity with few sympathies or tastes in common, drawn together and in association for but one purpose and upon but one question. In such an assembly of diversity of education and training, how difficult for reason to have sway, or intelligence to control! Reason, alas! under such circumstances, is too often drowned in ignorance, intelligence bogged in stupidity, and questions of the greatest import decided by petty jealousies.

The presiding officer, after long

effort, enforced by vigorous thumpings upon a table that served the purpose of a secretary's desk, and repeated appeals to the more boisterous, finally succeeded in obtaining a degree of order and attention, and proceeded to state the special object of this meeting. This chief functionary, as is too often the case in assemblies where a free ballot governs, was not one of the most intelligent of the membership, yet he was the possessor of a shrewdness that enabled him to see the drift of the tide and keep his craft afloat in the current of popular favor. He had sufficient viciousness to make him popular with the vicious. To satisfy his ambition he would not hesitate to make himself popular with the boys by a liberal patronage of Schlausser's saloon, or own and reverently occupy a pew in the church to win the respect or at least the toleration of the moral and religious. In fact he

was a politician, the prototype of many found to-day in more exalted places of trust and profit. During the day he had freely circulated among his fellow-workmen, and without committing himself had learned the sentiment of the more influential of them in regard to the proposed reduction of wages, consequently was quite able to speak and act on the convening of the assembly. He spoke with quite an accent of the "Mother-Country," whose allegiance he had at the first opportunity abjured.

"Gentlemen," he said, "wull ye's lis'en. Ye's committee" (accent on the last syllable) "has called ye's together on very important business. Ye's have seen the notices up in the mills, sayin' that ye's must be takin' less wages. Now it's for ye's to spake yer moin's. Es fur me, an' I'm a-thinkin' I'm spakin' the moin's of a mojority of ye's (if mistakin I'll stand

corrected), I'm a-makin' no sich concessions."

"Faix, an' that's me moind," shouted Patrick Murphy.

"Hould yer tongue, ye blatherin' fool, while I'm a-spakin'. I was a-sayin' to ye's whin interrupted, I'm a-makin' no sich concessions. If John Bildin can't run his mills without a-grindin' tin per cint off'n me wages the ould machine may stand till kingdom cum. Now, what does ye's say?" And having thus delivered himself he resumed the chair of government.

That the master had spoken the sentiments of a majority of those present was evident from the applause and expressions of approval that greeted his speech from all quarters of the room, and it was apparent to the most casual observer that he who would stem this torrent of sentiment must possess the tact and address of a Mark Antony.

After the first ebullition of the talkative had somewhat subsided, Michael Durant, who had patiently waited his opportunity, stepped to the front and addressed the chairman. Michael's appearance was received with shouts and other noisy demonstrations of recognition, for in the six years of his life in the mills of Beldendale he had made many friends among his fellow-workmen. For a moment he calmly surveyed the assembly, taking in the situation and collecting his thoughts, then said:

"I fully appreciate the situation and the importance of the action we may take to-night in the matter before us, and its probable effect upon our interests as working-men. For six years I have worked in these mills, and have known many of you for a much longer time, and I regret very much the occasion of our being called together. Of one thing I am confident we must all testify, and

that is to the uniform kindness of Mr. Belden toward us in the years past. I think I know something of the history of the man, left an orphan at an early age, and who, as a poor boy, earned his living by working in a mill. He is, therefore, not a stranger to the wants of a working-man, and, I believe, in his prosperity, he has not forgotten them."

"An upstart, nothin' but an upstart; where did he git his monny?" shouted Patrick Murphy.

"Shut your trap, you beer-logged fool!" answered another to this interruption.

"Order!" demanded the chairman.

"Yes, order! order!" shouted a dozen voices in unison.

Michael proceeded: "This is the first time since I came here that a reduction has been asked. Payment of wages has been always promptly made, often at great personal incon-

venience to Mr. Belden, and I cannot but believe that this reduction would not be asked were it not that some stress of circumstances demanded it, and of which we are ignorant. I move, therefore, that a committee be appointed to confer with Mr. Belden in this matter."

These words of Michael, delivered with calmness, had to some extent soothed the turbulency of the assembly. The motion was seconded by two or three of the more conservative members.

"Ye's hear the motion for the appointment of a committ*ee*," said the chairman. "What's the wull of the assembly?"

"Away wid yer committees; that's just a trap. We'll attind to our own matters," came a voice.

"If the ould man's in a pinch let him say so, and we're the b'yes that'll help him out," remarked another.

"Let him show up his books and

then we'll know more about it, and not ask us to take his word for everything," chimed in a third.

"Yes, show the books, show the books, that's the talk," came a chorus of voices.

"Gintlemin, Oi favor the committee, and they can see about the books. All that's in favor of the motion say aye," shouted the chairman.

A chorus of "Ayes" followed.

"Those opposed, the same sign."

Another chorus of "Ayes."

"The motion is carried." And then quickly proceeding, without giving opportunity for a call for division, the chairman announced the names of the committee, and declared the assembly adjourned, thus cutting off further chance for discussion.

The members, so unceremoniously dismissed, clambered down the narrow and unlighted hallway to the street, some going directly home-

wards, others gathering in groups on the sidewalk, excitedly discussing the proceedings, while others repaired to the saloon of Johannes Schlausser to quench their thirst in numerous potations of foaming beer, and over their glasses to discuss the probable outcome.

"Vat you do mit der meedin'?" queried Johannes, as he filled and set upon the counter the schooners of frothy beverage.

"Faix, and we 'pinted a committee," replied Patrick Murphy.

"Oh, yah, yah; you nix aple to tend mit your own pizness," contemptuously answered Johannes. "Dot vas Shon Belden's leetle set up. Shon vas von scharp veller. He vonts to take avay your peer; he vonts to take avay your proat; he vonts to pee von leetle king mit Beldendale, shust like King Villiam. I specks he'll take avay your vurniture and dings, for rent for dem leetle

houses vat yous lives in, de nex' ding;" and Johannes gave a low, contemptuous chuckle, the poison of which rankled in the hearts of his besotted listeners and patrons.

"Not be a long soight," retorted Patrick. "His ould mills will be gutted and his pig-pens of houses burned to the ground if he attimpts that little game, an' every mither's son of us, and Bridget too, wull stand to the backs of us and loight the'r poips at the foir."

"Aw, vell, you vus notings but von pack of cowards, anyvay; all 'dock un nix vool,' und ven Shon Belden's bolice cumes 'round mit der Vinchester shotguns you shust runs like sheeps; dot's vat you does;" and Johannes chuckled again as he filled the empty glasses, chalking them down on his convenient slate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRIKE.

THE day following the meeting of Assembly No. 10, work at the mills went on as usual. No sign of brewing trouble could be seen about the works, yet there was a certain reserve in the actions of the workmen and an absence of the customary hilarity common about such places among the men that was quite observable. Mr. Belden was early at the office of the works, earlier than usual, and there was an air of expectancy about him, for he had been apprised of the action of the meeting of the preceding night.

Early in the day the committee called and were received with due courtesy. After passing the usual

compliments Mr. Belden smoothed the way to the business upon which they had called by remarking, "I am informed that your Assembly has taken some steps at its meeting last evening regarding my notices of the reduction of wages."

"Yes," replied the chairman and spokesman of the committee, "and we are here to talk the matter over with you. The assembly is unanimous not to submit to the proposed reduction unless satisfied that it is absolutely necessary by reason of your financial inability to continue the works."

"You are doubtless aware," Mr. Belden answered; "that the iron market is exceedingly dull and money close, and much of our manufactured product has to be carried often for months before it can be sold. If you do not know this all you have to do is look about the mills and know the facts from observation. And often

when sales are made, paper must be taken in payment, running on long time, and to be realized upon requires heavy discounts."

"We are aware of the truth of much you say," replied the chairman, "but the general opinion is that these works have been very successfully run, that the profits have been large, and that the proposed reduction is entirely uncalled for, and your mere general statement will not satisfy the men to the contrary."

"What additional proof do they require than the statement I have made?" queried Mr. Belden.

"An inspection of your books by competent men," replied the chairman.

"An inspection of my books? That is a demand extraordinary. Why, no court in Christendom, in even a legal proceeding, would entertain, much less grant such a demand

when made by parties not in interest. My books are my records of my accounts and dealings with other parties, purchasers of my products, and sellers to me of stock and supplies. These are my private affairs, and if that is the condition of your continuing to work it is useless for further conference. I have always sought to deal honorably with you, often to my detriment, and if my word of honor is not sufficient, then the sooner we know it the better. Is this demand your ultimatum?"

"This is, as we are instructed, the demand of the union, as these gentlemen with me will bear witness."

"Then your union is making a condition that, I can assure you, will never be submitted to as long as I run these works, and, until modified, further conference is useless. So good-day, gentlemen;" and waving his hand toward the door as an intimation that further parley was use-

less, Mr. Belden turned to his desk and resumed his interrupted work.

At the next meeting of the assembly the committee made their report of their interview with Mr. Belden, minutely detailing all that passed.

"The ould man's a-puttin' on airs. We'll be after givin' him a chance to know where his money comes from before anither month rolls round," remarked Patrick Murphy; and every particular red hair on his head seemed to stand more erect with defiance.

"We'll teach the gentleman manners the next time we send a committee to call."

"The popinjay! I wonder if he's a-thinkin' money's everything, and muscle counts for nothing; we'll teach him different before this little affair is settled."

"He's soon forgot his early trainin', an' that his father was a workin'-mon."

Such were some of the audible comments that greeted the committee's report.

Michael Durant and others of the more conservative members urged further negotiations, but in vain; their entreaties were overwhelmed in the rising tide of indignation of the more excitable, and all thought of possible arbitration or adjustment was soon abandoned, and a strike was inevitable. Daily the amicable relation of employer and employé became more constrained. As Mr. Belden made his accustomed daily rounds through the works, visiting and inspecting each department, the pleasant nods and greetings, the laughs and jokes of familiarity and good will, became fewer. The men only spoke as they were spoken to. The signs were ominous; the very air of the place seemed pervaded with the spirit that infected the workmen.

At last the fatal first of September dawned. "No compromise," was written on every face. The fires were drawn, the furnaces banked, the tools laid away, and silently the workmen withdrew from the mills; and then and there began a contest between employer and employé that was destined to continue through the long fall and winter months. Labor had cast down the gauntlet, and capital had accepted the challenge to a battle for supremacy that endurance alone should determine. Both sides counted the costs and buckled themselves for the contest.

Mr. Belden cancelled all possible contracts that he could not fill by manufactured material on hand or by substitution of other parties, and metaphorically trimmed his ship and cleared his decks for action.

The Knights counted the funds in their treasury, communicated with their brother Knights, and received

their assurance of substantial aid in the impending struggle.

The hum of industry ceased, and the banners of smoke, pillars of cloud by day and fire by night, no longer overshadowed the village and valley and gave their tokens of business activity. Men walked listlessly about the streets, employing their time in idle gossiping, or worse, loitered in and about the saloon of Johannes Schlausser, poisoning their bodies, emptying their pockets, and filling their minds with the anarchistic ideas of the proprietor.

As time dragged its weary days along, the men became more and more nervous, and as, day by day, their own small savings grew less and less, and the local treasury of the assembly was becoming depleted, restlessness took the place of listlessness. Madam Rumor was always busy, and stories of the employment of others to take their places in the

mills were in almost daily circulation. Every movement about the mills was watched with anxious care, and Mr. Belden's steps were constantly dogged by lynx-eyed detectives. He could not ride out in his carriage, take the train for the neighboring city, walk the village streets, go to and from his office, or talk with his chance friends except under the shadow of a constant surveillance. Even the privacy of his fireside was invaded; his domestics and man of all work, they of his own household, became eavesdroppers and reporters of his every word and action. A system of guards and lookouts was organized, and every thoroughfare in the village, whether by rail, river, or public road, was watched and guarded with the closest vigilance. Strangers visiting the town, whether on business or pleasure, were stopped and interrogated; and if, perchance, they became indig-

nant at such wanton interference in their private affairs, they were advised to leave the place under a threat of personal violence.

Neither was Mr. Belden inactive. Men schooled in all the arts of deception, as he who would be a successful detective must be, circulated freely among the men, talked blatantly of the wrongs of workingmen, wormed themselves into the good graces of the unwary toilers, benumbed their faculties with beer, loosened their tongues with joke and jest, and then, with cool deliberation, wrung from their helpless victims, by well-directed questioning, every purpose of their union and secret of the lodge.

Thus like two gladiators standing face to face, seeking by every art and stratagem to gain and hold the advantage, these twin brothers of prosperity, labor and capital, sought each the other's discomfiture and overthrow.

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPTED AND TRIED.

ONE November evening John Belden sat in his office busily conning over books and papers. Some contracts that he had made before the inauguration of the strike, and which he then thought could be placed with other firms, he had found could not be so easily disposed of. The proprietors of other works, while willing to take the contracts, discovered that their employés were on the alert and threatened a strike, or refusal to work, on any contract that their employers might make for the purpose of relieving the Beldendale works, and the prospects of suits for accruing damages for their non-ful-

fillment was not a pleasant theme for Mr. Belden's contemplation. While he sat meditating, the shades of evening gathered over valley and village. Rising from his desk he struck a light, then, hoisting the windows, closed the shutters with extra care. These precautions taken against any possible lurking intruders, he resumed his seat and continued his work. With the man absorbed in business, time passes swiftly. Looking at his watch, Mr. Belden was surprised to see that it was past eleven o'clock.

"Eleven o'clock and Barney not here! He must have extra business on hand," he remarked to himself.

Just then there was a slight tap at the front office door. "That must be Barney, but it's not his usual way of coming;" and rising, Mr. Belden moved cautiously toward the door. "Who's there?" he demanded.

"A person who wants to see you

on particular business," came the answer in low tones from without.

"A rather late caller for business," responded Mr. Belden. "Please pass your card into the letter-box."

In a moment there was dropped through the little aperture a card, which Mr. Belden took to the light and read :

JONES & Co.,
Employment Agents.
J. P. SHARP, Agent, No.— Broadway,
New York.

Stepping to the door and quietly opening it, Mr Belden bade his late visitor enter.

"I'm happy to meet you, Mr. Belden, even under such adverse circumstances," said Mr. Sharp, entering the door and extending his hand.

"I can hardly say as much," replied Mr. Belden, taking the hand of the

stranger mechanically ; "but before further conversation let me ask of you: have you any additional credentials? Cards, you know, are easily printed, and can be had for the price of printing in quantity, and no questions asked."

"Oh, as to that matter, I am well fortified. Here is a letter of introduction from a firm with whom you are, doubtless, well acquainted, and will, I think, put you at rest."

Mr. Sharp handed Mr. Belden a letter, which he hastily opened and read ; it ran as follows :

"New York, Nov.—, 18—.

"Mr. John Belden,

"Dear Sir:

"This will introduce to you Mr. J. P. Sharp, agent for Jones & Co., Employment Agents of this city. He is perfectly reliable and can probably assist you to solve your labor difficulties. We are exceedingly anxious that there shall be no slip in the fulfillment of our contract of

July last for the delivery of steel plate, otherwise we shall suffer great loss.

"Yours respectfully,
"WORDEN & CO."

"Ah, I comprehend; be seated, Mr. Sharp."

Mr. Sharp accepted the proffered seat and remarked: "Judging from the difficulties one encounters in securing an interview with you, you are as carefully guarded as the Czar of all the Russias."

"Yes," replied Mr. Belden jocosely, "my recent employés seem to have a watchful regard for my safety, whether I remain here or go abroad."

"Yes, but I fear it is the care manifested by the wolf for the lamb," replied Mr. Sharp. "But I have only a few moments for business. I have been so hindered and detained by your special friends, and I must return to New York by the two o'clock express. I have come at the solicita-

tion of your friends, Worden & Co., to proffer to you the assistance of my firm in furnishing you the necessary number of men to start your works and fill your accumulated orders and contracts."

"I much prefer that my own men should do the work," answered Mr. Belden. "Most of them are good workmen and understand the mills in all their departments, and I had hoped that ere this they would see that I truly wished their welfare and would yield to the reduction I asked, and which, in the present condition of the market, is necessary to keep the mills in operation at all."

"Yes, that is doubtless true, but you certainly see the improbability of their making the concession you ask. You are aware that they are receiving encouragement and finacial aid from other unions, and that so long as this continues they will remain out; while you are daily running the

risk of violating your contracts, and being mulcted in heavy damages, possibly to your financial ruin."

The reasoning of Mr. Sharp and the closing sentence of Worden & Co.'s letter of introduction were having their influence upon Mr. Belden.

"But," he said, "if I bring other workmen here and their families it will compel me to oust from my tenant houses their present occupants, many of whose wives and children would be the innocent sufferers of the stubbornness of their husbands and fathers. The winter is upon them, and the distress it would entail would be unbearable to me. No, I cannot think of taking such a step, even to save myself from the consequence of broken contracts."

"That difficulty can be easily overcome," replied Mr. Sharp. "The men we will select for your works need not be men of families. We have a great many to select from, and

can have regard to that matter. Temporary barracks can be erected near the mills, where they can be lodged and fed, and thus be much more immediately under your control than though living in your houses."

"I see the logic of your reasoning," Mr. Belden answered, "and the probabilities are that my own old workmen, seeing the futility of continuing the strike, may the sooner be willing to return to work. At all events, if they continue to hold out I shall have the consolation of knowing that their families will be in no worse condition, so far as shelter is concerned, from any act of mine. But suppose the men should attempt to resist the putting of others in their places? Some threats of that kind have been reported to me. In such a case what would you suggest?"

"Suggest? Why, that matter is easily disposed of, and your course of action plain. If resistance is attempt-

ed call upon the proper authority, the sheriff of the county, to protect you; forcible resistance is a breach of the peace that the local constabulary are bound to prevent. But I think I can suggest a more certain way to overcome this possible contingency. These local officials are found, in my experience, too often to be in sympathy with the strikers; or worse, to be subservient to them by reason of their political power. Votes count, you know, and Pat Finnigan's vote in the ballot box is just as good in the way of carrying an election as that of John Belden, and there are a hundred Finnigans to one Belden. Yes, a better way is to employ of some reliable detective agency, such as Craft & Craft, of our city, a sufficient number of their guards, armed detectives, who will, without doubt, give you full protection."

"I hardly think such extreme measures need be resorted to: at

least, I hope not," replied Mr. Belden. "I do not believe that these men who have been in my employ for years, and with whom I have in a manner associated daily, and toward whom I have often had occasion to show my personal regard by acts of kindness, would resort to violent resistance."

"You reckon without your host, Mr. Belden. If I am to judge of the spirit of some of your men whom I have met in this village, even in my brief stay, on occasion they would not hesitate to resort to violence to gain their ends. But time is passing, and my going must not be delayed. Do you wish to contract for the men?"

"You may say to your agency that I want at least one hundred skilled men to work those departments necessary to enable me to fill my contracts. An agreement may be prepared and sent me stipulating for a rate of wages, including board and

lodging, not to exceed the wages which I proposed to pay my former employés. As for the guards, I'll leave that for future consideration, dependent upon developments."

"With that understanding I will be going, as it is approaching my train time. Good-night, Mr. Belden;" and Mr. Sharp rose to go.

"Good-night, Mr. Sharp. Give Worden & Co. my regards, and say their contract shall be complied with if it takes all the militia of Pennsylvania to protect me in the effort. Good-night."

Mr. Sharp stepped hastily out into the darkness. Mr. Belden returned to his desk, consulted his watch, and said to himself, "Half-past one, and Barney not here. What can be detaining him?"

CHAPTER X.

CONSPIRACY.

After Mr. Sharp's departure Mr. Belden sat in his office thinking over the conversation narrated in the preceding chapter. He could not tolerate the thought that any of his employés could entertain toward him a malice sufficient to cause them to premeditate personal injury or the destruction of his property; and yet, from the import of remarks overheard and reported to him, there was sufficient to put him upon his guard. His train of thought was at length arrested by three distinct raps upon the shutter of his office window. He rose from his chair, and walking to the window, demanded in a low voice

who was there. Three low whistles were the response.

"Come to the rear door, Barney, and I'll let you in."

Quietly unbolting the door, he admitted his belated visitor.

Barney Foy had long been a trusted employé of Mr. Belden. Irish by birth, he had when a lad emigrated to the United States as a stowaway, and upon his arrival found the precarious livelihood of the street urchin by selling papers and blacking boots. Being of a delicate constitution, he could not long withstand the hardships and exposure of a street waif's life, and soon succumbed to a slow fever. Destitute and alone upon the streets, Mr. Belden, on the occasion of one of his visits to the city, found him. Noticing his pale countenance and emaciation, he spoke kindly to him, and learning of his destitution and illness, had him taken to a hospital for treatment, personally super-

intending his removal, and arranging for his proper care.

Before leaving him Mr. Belden said: "Barney, when you get well come to Beldendale and I will give you employment. I have arranged with your physician to pay your railroad fare;" and shaking the feverish hand of the boy, he bade him goodbye.

Two months afterward Barney Foy came to Beldendale. Mr. Belden gave him employment in his mills, and in that employment he grew to manhood, and as such became a member of Assembly No. 10. When the strike came, with the true heart of the Irishman, he was loyal to his benefactor. He could not forget the man who in his hour of sickness and need had befriended him. His quick wit and ready repartee won him many friends among his associates and made him a favorite with all. He went and came freely among the men,

and made himself familiar with all their plans and purposes. Knowing well that any exhibition of his devotion to Mr. Belden would make him an object of suspicion, and thus defeat his purpose to befriend him, he became an ultra agitator among the strikers, and was the confidant of the most desperate among them. Not even Patrick Murphy nor any of his class could excel Barney in his denunciations of the capitalists, and particularly of Mr. Belden ; while nightly he sought the office of the man whom he so roundly abused during the day, and faithfully repeated to him all the news he had gathered. Unconsciously he had become an informer and spy upon his fellow-workmen, and so truthful were his reports that Mr. Belden soon trusted him implicitly.

"Why, Barney, you are a late caller. Was there anything special that detained you until this hour?" inquired Mr. Belden.

"Something quoite special," replied Barney. "Oi had a pressin' invitation this afternoon to attend a little informal gatherin' this evening which Oi thought Oi'd better not refuse, so Oi wint."

"Ah, an informal gathering! I am naturally suspicious of such; had it relation to my affairs?"

"Quoite a close relation, Mr. Belden, or Oi would have decloined the invitation," replied Barney.

"Well, tell me all about it; don't keep me in suspense; it is growing late."

"Well, you see, yesterday afternoon Oi were down boy the saloon, and seein' a good many of the byes in there, Oi dropped in too. Paddy Murphy was in there, as usual, and comin' up to me he says, says he: 'And would you loike to attend a little party this evenin'?' says he. Oi says 'What party, Paddy?' and he says, says he, 'A little party some of

the byes are gettin' up out at the Milligan Shaft.' Oi says, 'It's a queer place for a party; ony ladies be there?' and he says, 'No, only gintlemin, and perhaps a quart or so of Schlausser's best, ye know, to enloiven the occasion.' Oi says, 'Toimes is mighty hard, and ould Bilden (excuse the language) is a-rubbin' of it in on us, the baste of an aristocrat.' An' Paddy says, says he, 'You are one of the byes, and it is for his special binifit we are havin' of the party;' and thin Oi was a-gittin' interested and Oi says, says Oi, 'Oi'll accipt the invitation;' and Paddy says, says he, 'It's a koind of masquerade, and ye must fix yourself koind of up for the occasion, for there's no tellin' who of ould Bilden's cops will be a-lookin' about, and a-trying to make one of the party;' and Oi says, says Oi, 'Faith, Paddy an' Oi'll be there an' so fixed that ould Satan himself wouldn't know me;' and he says,

'Mate me here at eight o'clock sharp.'

"So I wint, and whin we came to the shaft a man stopped us and says, 'Who's here?' and Paddy says, 'Laborer' (that's the password, ye know), 'en' a friend;' and he says, 'All roight,' and so we wint down the shaft. When we got to the bottom there were at least a hundred others there, and every mither's son of them so rigged up that you wouldn't have known your own brither amongst them, sure. They swore me by all that's good and bad, the saints and blissid Virgin, never to spake a word. Oi' felt like gittin' out o' thot, but Oi couldn't, Mr. Belden, Oi couldn't. Oi were in for it and had to take the medicine.

"The matin' had a prisident, and anither mon got up and read from a paper—he said it was a telegram, or somethin' loike—sayin', 'Look out for a man named Sharp, an employment

agent;' and thin anither one said, 'I seed a mon schlippin' about town to-day that Oi didn't know and didn't like the looks on, and he were up about the office this evenin'.' And thin anither spoke up (he had come in late) and said, 'Oi saw the mon go into the office;' and thin they all said, 'That's the lad,' and the first thing we'd know ould Bilden would have a bloody pack of black shape in the mulls.

"Paddy Murphy spakes up and says, 'We'll blow up the bloody ould mull an' every blatin' black shape wid it, and me an' Bridget's the mon that'll be afther doin' of it.' And then after this little confab the prisident said, 'It's toime to be a-drillin', and they got us up and stood us in two lang rows, and thin they give to each of us a bloody shootin'-iron, and Oi says, 'Fat's the guns for, and this drillin' down here in this howl in the ground?' And Paddy says, says he,

'It's for the binifit of ould Bilden and his snakin' crowd o' cowardly spalpeens;' and they drilled and drilled until methought I nivir was goin' to git here to-night."

Mr. Belden had listened most attentively to Barney's narrative of the evening's events, and not a word had escaped him; matters were rapidly nearing a crisis. It was evident that the purpose of Mr. Sharp's visit was known, that the men were armed and secretly drilling, and that an attempt to man the works would be resisted even to the shedding of blood.

Mr. Belden rose from his chair and paced his office floor rapidly. Turning, he stopped before Barney and inquired, "When do they meet again?"

"Saturday noight," replied Barney.

"And you will go?" queried Mr. Belden.

"Sartainly."

"And report everything to me?"

"Sartainly."

"How much I owe to you, Barney!"

"Niver a cent, Mr. Belden. The debt I owe to yez is beyond me to pay."

"Go now, Barney; be watchful, and above all be careful, for if you should be suspected your life would not be worth a straw."

Mr. Belden went to the door, cautiously drew back the bolt, and was in the act of opening it when the building rocked on its foundations with a violence that staggered both its occupants. The shock was succeeded by a dull roar that reverberated from hill to hill, and echoed up and down the river valley.

Mr. Belden turned with blanched face to Barney. "What does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"The byes are afther a-trying' a little doinamite, I suspect," answered Barney.

"Some mischief is up," said Mr. Belden. "Here—don't leave the office until I turn out the light; we may be watched. Now go, and be very careful."

Barney stepped quietly out and disappeared in the darkness.

Mr. Belden rebolted the door and passed to the front of the office and out upon the street. Lights were glimmering in many of the houses, and the sound of feet resounded along the streets. The explosion had aroused the whole village. Mr. Belden hastened to the mills, where quite a crowd had already congregated. The damage from the explosion was but slight; a few broken timbers was all, but it was sufficient to admonish him of the dangers that environed him, and the spirit that was abroad that needed but slight provocation to break out into open hostility.

CHAPTER XI.

A SPECIMEN OF LEGAL PROTECTION.

THE events of the past twenty-four hours had been a great revelation to Mr. Belden. The visit of Mr. Sharp, the secret meeting at the shaft, the arming and drilling of a part, at least, of his recent employés, the explosion at the mills, stimulated him to the need of immediate action for his personal protection and that of his property. He was a man of quick decision and great tenacity of purpose, and when his plans were once formed he carried them out without hesitation. He at once commenced the construction of a strong fence, or stockade, enclosing all the buildings connected with the works. He

visited the county seat and solicited protection of the sheriff.

That functionary made a hasty visit to Beldendale. The workmen at the mills, as he remembered, had largely been his constituents in his election, a circumstance not to be forgotten, while Mr. Belden had been openly a supporter of the opposition ticket, consequently if the "executor of the law" had any sympathies they naturally were with the employés. He heard the story of their grievances; he counselled moderation, and assured Mr. Belden that he need fear no injury to his property or person; that many of his late employés had assured him of this, and some had even expressed a willingness to be deputized to act as special guards in the event of such being needed; that they had expressed regret that anyone should have attempted to do injury; that they were confident that no member of the association was

guilty of such an act; and that suspicious strangers had been seen loitering about his works, and the explosion was probably at their instigation.

"I have good cause to doubt these statements," replied Mr. Belden, "yet I have no positive evidence that I could fix the guilt on any particular persons; but suppose I should desire to fill the places of my late workmen with others, would they be willing to guard my property?"

"Ah, Mr. Belden, that question is rather difficult to answer," replied the sheriff. "Do you think they would be willing to see you take the bread out of their own children's mouths and give it to others? Would that be natural?"

"But you concede my right to do as I please with my own, to work these mills in the way I please, and by whom I please, and that in the exercise of this lawful right you are legally bound to protect me."

"Abstractly, this may be your right; but have these men no rights that you are as equally bound to respect? While you have furnished the capital, have they not furnished the muscle that has built up this great industry, and that has brought to you wealth and independence? and is this all to go for naught in settlement of the question of a ten per cent reduction?" *

"Your reasoning is absurd," replied Mr. Belden. "Suppose that this ten per cent reduction means the preservation of the works or their abandonment, continued labor for these men at slightly reduced wages, or no labor. Am I, as owner and manager of these works, to take into

* The reader need not be surprised at the utterances of this mere county politician. Men high in the councils of the nation, on the Senate floor, have in open debate advanced very similar arguments, to the astonishment of every well-informed person, on the rights of ownership, use, and control of property.

my counsel these men and submit to them the propriety of making such a reduction? What do they know of the intricacies of a vast business such as this, and the effect of an increase or reduction of what may seem to you the very paltry sum of ten per cent? Why, on less margins, firms have failed or made fortunes. No, I pay these men for their labor, and because, forsooth, they have been in my employ ten or fifteen years, that fact gives them no more right to dictate whom I shall employ and how I shall conduct my business, than the man who has served me but a month or who has never served at all. But this is foreign to the question. In the event of my endeavoring to start my mills and fulfill my contracts, can I expect your protection?"

"As to that," replied the sheriff, "I shall do my duty under the law as I understand it, that is, I shall

preserve the peace when a breach of the peace is threatened."

"And was not the attempt to blow up the mills last night such a breach of the peace as deserves your attention, and that under your oath of office requires you to take such steps as will prevent a recurrence?" demanded Mr. Belden.

"Not as I understand it," said the sheriff. "There is no open hostility or threats of violence that have come to my knowledge which would justify me in taking such a step; as to the parties who attempted to blow up your mill, the same rule will apply as in all other cases. We catch the thief when identified; when you identify the parties who sought the destruction of your property last night, and place in my hands the proper warrants for their arrest, I shall do my duty."

"Then I am to understand that you are powerless to afford me protection,

and that I shall have to depend upon my own devices?"

"I see nothing that I can do," answered the sheriff.

Mr. Belden was on the point of telling him of the meeting and secret drilling, but from the evident sympathy manifested by him for the strikers, he hesitated, and thus ended the interview.

"And so the law is powerless, rendered impotent by the very agency intended to carry it into effect," mused Mr. Belden, "and nothing remains for me to do to protect my interests, and perhaps my life, but the suggestion of Sharp. I shall wire him at once;" and turning to his desk he indited the following telegram:

"Beldendale, Pa., Nov.—, 18—.

"*Mr. J. P. Sharp, Agent of Jones & Co., No.—Broadway, New York:*

"See Craft & Craft and arrange to

furnish fifty men to act as escort and guards for the men you propose to furnish under your contract.

"JOHN BELDEN."

This done, Mr. Belden put on his hat, went personally to the telegraph office, delivered his message to the operator, then walked leisurely to his residence to seek, if possible, in the quiet of his family circle rest for an hour from the cares and perplexities of his busy life.

At the Assembly Hall quite a number of the members were present, especially those serving upon the various committees, for now the hall was kept open every day, and to and from it were continually passing members of the organization in quest of news, or upon some errand connected with the duties of the several committees.

A quick step upon the stairway, and a young man, breathless and

flushed with excitement, entered the room and calling aside the chairman of the Executive Committee handed him a slip of paper. Opening and hastily reading it he turned to his associates, and said: "The committee will at once convene in executive session."

The members present came quickly together, and then he read the contents of the slip:

"*Patrick Marley, Chairman Executive Committee:*

"I have just caught a message on the lines to Jones & Co., Employment Agency, New York, to arrange with Detective Agency for fifty men to guard the mills and the men Belden proposes to employ. Can't leave my post, so send by messenger.

"JOHN MILLS."

"This is very important information. Shall it be brought before the

assembly in open session? What say you?"

"Belden is forcing matters to the wall. We are aware that there is an element among us that is very difficult to control, and I very much fear that this news to them will be accepted as an open challenge, and should, I think, be kept to ourselves, or bloodshed may result," remarked Michael Durant.

"Me opinion is, that if Bildin takes the bits in his tath he must take the consequences of a sore mouth. I'm in favor of lettin' the byes know," answered Mike Maguire.

"A show of force to meet force may deter the men employed by Belden from being the tools of capital to deprive us of our just rights. I am not in favor of withholding this information from our people, but moderation should be urged, and care taken to avoid a breach of the peace, else the sheriff and his posse,

and possibly the militia, will be upon us, and our last state will be worse than the first," counselled another.

But there was no need of further deliberation on the part of the committee; by some means the news had reached the street of the coming of the detective force, and like all rumors had gathered force and volume as it passed from mouth to mouth, until it was actually believed that the mills were already denizened by a horde of armed detectives.

Quickly the village streets were filled with a mass of excited humanity. Men, women, and children mingled promiscuously, and imprecations loud and deep were hurled from the lips of the more boisterous and desperate, while the conservative ones were cowed into a silence that was readily interpreted as acquiescence. Like the first rush of the torrent down the mountain-side, rending before the oncoming flood, rocks and trees, with

deafening crash and roar, so are the first ebullitions of the human torrent of violence; but, the first mad rush passed, there comes in its wake the deeper and more destructive torrent, only quieter because of an unobstructed course.

These idle rumors were, however, soon put at rest. A visit to the mills showed them empty of human occupants, deserted; but still the fact that men to work them and guards to protect them might be expected any day kept the town on the *qui vive*. At Assembly Hall there was the greatest activity. Lookouts were doubled, signals arranged, committees appointed to meet, interview, and induce the new men to abandon their new employer before or when they might arrive. And nightly at the Milligan Shaft the more desperate, with loaded arms, drilled and prepared for resistance to the death.

Beldendale slept, if it could be said

to sleep, on a smoldering volcano that at any moment might burst into terrible activity. The daily papers, with active reporters on the ground, by flaming headlines and lengthy columns, portrayed the situation. Beldendale, known heretofore only as a business center of commercial activity and enterprise, was now the theme of pulpit and rostrum, the focus of all eyes, the daily topic of conversation in mansion and counting-house, hovel and saloon.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RIOT.

THE contract with the employment agency was duly received, signed, and returned by Mr. Belden, who daily awaited the arrival of the men and guards. The work of preparation to receive them went on rapidly. The stockade was finished, and barracks were erected for the housing of the new employés within the enclosure. Barney Foy, by his nightly visitations, kept Mr. Belden fully informed of every movement made by his late employés. The ranks of the strikers had been greatly augmented by the hordes of unemployed and the tramp element, attracted to the town by the possible hope of plunder or the

excitement incident to such a state of society. Vicious characters, ready for any desperate undertaking, lurked about waiting their opportunity.

Early one December morning a telegram was received by Mr. Belden informing him that the necessary number of workmen had been secured and that they, with the guards, would leave that day by special train for Beldendale, and would probably arrive within the next twenty-four hours. The clicking of the telegraphic instruments conveyed to John Mills the same information, who from his safe retreat over the telegraph office in the village noted, with quick ear, all that passed in the office below.

Early in the day Mr. Belden quietly left Beldendale, and, boarding the east-bound express, met the special at Harrisburg. As they journeyed westward he held a long consultation with the officers in charge, exhibiting to them maps and charts of his works,

the village, and surrounding country, and explaining to them, as best he could, the actual situation of affairs. As a result, it was concluded to stop the train at Batesville Siding, five miles east of Beldendale, where they would arrive at about nine o'clock in the evening, and thence march to Beldendale, timing themselves so as to reach the works at about three o'clock the next morning, and thus, under cover of the darkness and probable unwatchfulness of the strikers at that hour, gain an entrance to the works without opposition.

At Altoona Mr. Belden left the special. "I will take the west-bound express here, and have at the Batesville Siding a competent guide, who knows every cross-road between that and Beldendale, who will safely pilot you," he said to the officer in command; and he stepped from the train as it drew up to the station.

Let us now return to Beldendale

and note the events of the passing hours. The communication of John Mills' caught telegram to the striking workmen again filled the streets with an excited multitude. The faces of the men were sternly set, and words were few. A determination so marked their actions and expression that one could not but be impressed with the thought that a crisis had indeed come that was to strain to the utmost tension the peace of the community.

John Mills, the striker's friendly telegraph operator, now abandoned his post at the village office and turned his attention to the railroad office. To note the progress of the special was now his duty. Walking leisurely down to the railway depot, he strolled apparently indifferently into the dispatcher's office.

"What's all this fuss about up street, John?" inquired that official.

"Oh, haven't you heard? Why,

Belden is bringing a pack of black sheep and a batch of Pinkertons from New York."

"The dickens you say! By our road?"

"No, by the B. & O., and there'll likely be music when they get here."

The telegraph instrument ticked out the station call. The dispatcher turned to the key and answered, then came the words to the operator's ear as distinct as though spoken, "Special from New York on road. Running wild. At Atwood now. Run regular trains with care."

John Mills was all attention.

"Well, we have a special to-day. Sure they're not coming this way?" queried the dispatcher.

"No," answered Mills, "by the B. & O. We heard from them this morning and know which way they will come."

"Glad I haven't to handle that crew," remarked the dispatcher.

Would feel like ditching them, eh?" suggested John inquiringly, then continued, "When I used to dispatch on the railroad I liked to run specials; there was always an excitement about it."

"Well, stay this afternoon, if you have nothing else to do, and watch this one."

This was just the invitation John wanted, and with a "Thank you," he seated himself and gave his undivided attention.

"What time will this load of New York bums get here, think you?" inquired the dispatcher.

"Oh, not likely till to-morrow night."

"The boys will make mutton of them if I am to judge by their talk. The poor lambs, I pity them. Belden's got the stiff neck and lost his head. I never thought it of him; I always thought him to be a gentleman."

"Not only the stiff neck, but worse, the swelled head," sarcastically answered Mills.

The day passed away and the evening shades gathered in the valley, and John Mills noted every dispatch regarding the special. On an excuse for a drink of beer, he would go frequently to the saloon of Johannes Schlausser. Beer was not, however, the motive of his oft repeated visits, although a drink of that beverage he would not decline, but by previous arrangement he there communicated to members of the executive committee the progress of the special. Night had fully closed in and enfolded the village in its sombre mantle, and lights were lit in the dispatcher's office and along the tracks at switch targets, when suddenly the instrument clicked out, "Side-track special at Batesville Siding."

"Why, that's a queer one; a passenger special from New York side-

tracked at that out-of-the-way place with no train from either way to pass in the next half hour. If it were summer time and good fishing, I could understand it, but in the dead of winter, whew!"

"Well," answered Mills, "that picnic party's Belden's lambs, I'll bet. B. & O.'s not in it, and we've been watching her all day and never found it out. Nine o'clock; no supper. I must, at least, have some bread and cheese. So good-night."

Walking hastily along the street, John Mills elbowed his way through the excited knots of men and women gathered on the sidewalks to the Assembly Hall. Here he announced the last message over the wires. Secrecy had ceased to be a factor, and in the glare of a street lamp the fact of the siding of the special at Batesville, only five miles away, was publicly announced in large display letters upon an improvised bulletin

board to the now thoroughly aroused and angered multitude, who received the intelligence with a howl of rage. Leaping upon a drygoods box, a little man with red shocky hair and a shrill voice that could be heard high above the babel, cried out:

"Stand to your guns, byes; the murtherin' spalpeens is on yez. Give 'em powder for lunch, and your hottest lead broth for their breakfast. And here's me Bridget, and she'll be the last mon of yez to run;" and with this appeal he lifted to his side a woman, who excitedly waved in her hand a red bandanna handkerchief.

This little pantomime of Patrick Murphy and his wife was the signal for cheer after cheer, and the responsive waving of numerous similar emblems of radicalism by the frenzied mob gathered about the bulletin board.

Mr. Belden arrived on the evening express, and went at once to his

office. Here to his delight he found Barney awaiting him.

"Barney," said he, "as soon as it is fully dark, take the fastest horse in the stable and ride for all you are worth to Batesville Siding; at nine o'clock the special, with my men and guards, will be there; report to Captain Fitzsimmons at once; you are to act as his guide to-night. Here is a note that will introduce you. Disguise yourself so that there will be no possibility of your identification by the strikers—but first, tell me how goes it in town to-day?"

"The very ould scratch is loose, Mr. Belden; they've had a bulletin-board up all afternoon, and the comin' of the train has been posted iv'ry hour; and there's been more bad whisky drunk in Beldendale this afternoon than for a year past, and the paple's all a scratchin' and a-howlin' bloody murther, and it won't be safe for yez to be seen out the night."

"Ah! I suppose Johannes is getting in his work in good shape; but all right, Barney, there'll be a different tale to be told in the morning. Go now, and a safe journey."

"All roit, Mr. Belden, an' a safe deliverance to yez."

In a few minutes Barney rode quietly out of the village, avoiding as far as possible the groups of men along the way, until reaching the outskirts he put spurs to the horse and dashed forward along the road to Batesville. Arriving at the siding he sought out Captain Fitzsimmons. The men had disembarked, kindled fires along the railway track, and were partaking of a hastily prepared supper. Barney scanned their faces closely. They were a motley crowd, apparently of all nationalities, and the refuse of the streets and alleys of the great city.

At one o'clock they were formed in line, a squad of guards preceding,

and another at the rear of the column. Loud conversation or any demonstration that would attract attention was strictly forbidden. Silently the column moved out upon and along the way to Beldendale. Nothing of note occurred until three miles of the way had been covered, when to their right, and apparently upon some elevation not discernible in the darkness, a tongue of flame flickered for a moment, then shot upward, painting the darkness with its red glow.

"What's that?" Captain Fitzsimmons inquired of Barney.

"Pr'aps some tramps, but loikely the strikers' outlookers," replied Barney.

The column moved silently on. Ascending an elevation in the roadway, within a mile of the village outskirts, a halt was called. The guards were directed to load their rifles, and then one-half their number were detailed as an advance

guard, and instructed to move rapidly forward and occupy the gates of the stockade, and in doing so to preserve the utmost caution so that no alarm might be given; the workmen and the remaining guards would follow more leisurely. Instructions were also given that arms were not to be used except to repel an attack by arms. With these cautionings the columns were again put in motion. A long descent led to the village, which at that hour seemed wrapped in profound slumber. The advance was soon out of sight in the darkness. Scarcely had half the distance been traversed until evidences, unmistakable, were apparent that the strikers were not unwatchful. To the right of them, with a swish, a red rocket rose in the air; in an instant there was another to their left; then came to their ears the jangling notes of an alarm-bell; lights twinkled from the windows of houses on the hillside and

in the valley, and moved here and there along the village streets.

"We are discovered," exclaimed Captain Fitzsimmons. "There is nothing now to do to avoid a collision but to gain the stockade. *Forward! Double-quick! March!*"

A shot in the advance, then another and another in quick succession, and a babel of voices could be distinctly heard.

"The advance is attacked. FORWARD, MEN! FORWARD!" shouted the captain.

With quickened step they rushed down the road. At a cut in the way, with steep embankments on either side, the advance was overtaken standing at bay. In the roadway, and on either bank, a hooting, howling mob pelted them with clods and stones and whatever other missiles came to hand. Captain Fitzsimmons took in the situation at a glance, and deploying the advance right and

left, ordered a charge up the embankments with drawn maces. The mob resisted stoutly and yielded ground reluctantly, but before the organized and disciplined guards was forced back, step by step, along the street toward the gates of the stockade.

Mr. Belden's valor got the better of his discretion, and hastening to the scene of conflict, he sought to put himself in communication with the officers of the guard. Pushing his way, unobserved in the darkness, through the mob, he encountered Barney Foy.

"You here, Mr. Bildin? Why, you'll be kilt sure!" he exclaimed.

"Take that, ye cowardly, pachin' spalpeen;" and a club in the hands of a burly Irishman descended on Barney's head, laying him senseless at the feet of his benefactor.

Mr. Belden turned and faced the assailant of the faithful Barney,

there was the sharp report of a revolver, and he staggered and fell, wounded and bleeding, over the prostrate form of Barney, while over them both, with malignant leer, stood Johannes Schlausser, the still smoking weapon clutched in his hand.

During these passing incidents, Patrick Murphy, with hatred delineated in every feature, and with the incoherency of rage on his lips, rushed forward and, with a might rendered almost superhuman with frenzy, cast a bomb high in the air, which, descending amid the ranks of the new employés, exploded with deafening roar, whirling its destructive missiles in every direction, and leaving on the ground a half a score of wounded and dying. "Take that, ye bloody robbers of me Bridget and the bairns!"

"*Attention! Guards, ready, aim, fire!*"

There was a crash of musketry.

"*Club your guns and charge.*"

With a rush and a cheer the guards, with clubbed guns, charged down upon the now thoroughly frightened and scattering mass. In a moment the gates of the stockade were gained, and the victory was won, but at what fearful cost! The lives of Patrick Murphy and six of his fellows, the maiming and wounding of twice as many more, while the proprietor himself lay seriously if not fatally wounded. Sorrow, tears, mournings, and bitterness of heart were the garlands of the victors of that night of riot in Beldendale.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTERCLAPS.

With leaden feet the morning dawned over village, valley, and river. The cold gray sky was in harmony with the sad events of the preceding night. Mr. Belden, bleeding and unconscious, had been borne to his mansion, his wounds dressed, and loving hands ministered to his needs. Barney Foy had also been carried to Mr. Belden's home ; but the bludgeon had done its work, for with crushed skull he lay unconscious; his heavy breathing, growing shorter and fainter each hour, told that dissolution was drawing nigh. The killed and wounded of the strikers had been taken to their respective homes. The

torn and mangled bodies of the strangers who had come in quest of employment were placed in an improvised morgue at the office of the works, while the injured of their number were taken to the public hospital in the neighboring city.

The guards, by details, patrolled the mills and guarded the gates of the stockade with shotted rifles, and the newly-arrived employés huddled together in the barracks, fearing to walk the streets or publicly expose themselves. Reporters of the press, by observation, interview, or drafts on the imagination, gathered their columns of news and besieged the telegraph office for the first opportunity to communicate their graphic descriptions of the events of the early morning to their respective papers.

Business was suspended. Even the doors of Johannes Schlausser's saloon remained closed, the proprietor in

hiding, fearing the consequences of his rash act. Men stood in groups about the street, discussing in undertones the events of the preceding night and their probable results. Beldendale was stunned ; the country read the story and stood aghast, and wondered that such scenes could be enacted in an enlightened community.

The sheriff, now all alive to his duty, arrived early with his posse of deputies and called upon the state for military assistance; but what need now? The governor responded by proclamation, calling out the militia, who, during the course of the day, arrived by special trains, and with flags flying, bands of music, gay equipments, and martial tread, paraded the village streets ; but for what now? Were not the fifty guards hired at the personal expense of Mr. Belden, and now in full possession of the fortified works, ample to meet all

emergencies and compel respect for law and order? The tragedy of the night before, that a proper administration of law should have prevented, had been enacted, and Beldendale was now peacefully engaged in coffining her dead, uttering the last prayer, chanting the last requiem, condoling with the widowed and orphans at the graves of her slain, or binding up the wounds of her fallen.

Why need we tarry to discuss who was in the right or who in the wrong? These are grave and weighty problems not easy of solution; but this we may truly say: judged by the highest known standard of ethics, taught by Him who said to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still," neither side was wholly right or wholly wrong. Human passion, human prejudice, avarice, and pride played their parts in the drama, and so long as the world standeth it will

be so, uninfluenced, unguided by the precepts of the great Teacher.

The next morning after the riot, as Mr. Duncan descended the stairs to his breakfast at his residence on Fifth Avenue, New York, he found, as usual, upon the rack in the hallway, the morning *Herald*. Picking it up and carelessly running his eye down the headlines on the first page his attention was riveted by these words :

"GREAT RIOT IN THE IRON REGIONS OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA.

"BELDENDALE THE SCENE OF A BLOODY ENCOUNTER BETWEEN STRIKERS AND DETECTIVES.

"MANY KILLED AND WOUNDED. AMONG THE LATTER THE PROPRIETOR OF THE WORKS. TROOPS CALLED OUT AND ON THEIR WAY TO THE SCENE OF DISTURBANCE."

Mr. Duncan read no further; the headlines told the whole dread story. He returned at once to his room. Mrs. Duncan was still at her morning toilet.

"Just as I expected, wife, the trouble at John's mills has culminated in a riot—so the paper says."

Mrs. Duncan turned to her husband with blanched cheeks.

"Any one injured?"

"Yes, dear, many injured."

"And John?" queried Mrs. Duncan, her gaze fixed on the face of her husband.

"Wounded," replied Mr. Duncan, "but not seriously, let us hope."

Mrs. Duncan sank into a chair and for a moment covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out the awful vision.

Mr. Duncan sprang to her side and folded her in his arms.

"Oh! this is terrible; let us go to him at once," she sobbed.

"Yes, dear, we will go. How much I wish we had gone before this! Possibly we might have prevented this sad catastrophe."

A tap at the door; Mr. Duncan turned and opened it; a servant handed him a message. Hastily opening it he read aloud:

"John is seriously wounded, but I hope not fatally. Come at once.

"Your daughter,

"MARY."

"Yes, we will go;" and touching the button of the electric call-bell, he summoned Mrs. Duncan's maid: "Pack Mrs. Duncan's trunks at once. We leave on this evening's train."

When Mr. and Mrs. Duncan arrived at Beldendale the next day a carriage was in waiting to convey them to the Belden residence. As they drove along the street they were impressed with the thought that they were in-

deed in a belligerent community. Patrol squads of blue-coated soldiers, with guns at "right shoulder shift," marched the streets, while guards stationed at every crossing paced their beats.

As Mr. Duncan and his wife were being conveyed up the principal street they were confronted with a strange procession for a community at peace. First came a brass band playing a dead march; next a platoon of militia, with arms reversed, marching with solemn tread to the time of the music; then followed several hearses with their black drapings, while on either side marched in column members of various orders and societies. Following the hearses came carriages with mourners and friends, while on the sidewalk, with uncovered heads, stood the village populace. Beldendale was burying her dead.

On arriving at the Belden mansion Mr. and Mrs. Duncan alighted and

entered the darkened chamber of the sufferer and gazed silently and with tear-dimmed eyes upon the pallid face of their son lying in unconscious stupor. The bullet of the assassin had well-nigh done its intended work. The missile had struck the head and plowed a deep furrow in the scalp, contusing the skull and producing partial unconciousness. There was no sign of recognition of father and mother, but in moments of semiconsciousness the patient talked incoherently of unfulfilled contracts and unsettled business affairs. A good constitution, constant attention by the best medical skill, rest, and quiet in the course of a few months brought back to Mr. Belden his usual health and strength. The wounding of the proprietor necessitated the closing of the mills until his recovery and the return of sufficient strength to resume the management.

In the final issue of this conflict it

is questionable to whom belonged the gains, if any there were, but not so as to those on whom fell the greater losses. Capital had lost its gains on investment, but labor its daily wages with all the attendant poverty, broken homes, shattered hopes, and suffering; while the generous hand that, in the past, had been so often opened in charitable deeds toward any unfortunate sick or suffering one among his employés in substantial acts of kindness, lay paralyzed on a couch of pain.

As soon as it was definitively known that the mills were closed, the late employés sought for employment at other manufacturing centres or where best it might be obtained. Michael Durant and a few others of the more conservative and trustworthy were retained to care for the property, while all others were given an indefinite discharge. At great cost to the state the troops were for

a time retained, that passion might cool and the civil authorities fully assert their powers. Johannes Schlausser was tracked to his hiding-place, arrested, and held to await the result of his felonious attack on Mr. Belden; and others of the more active promoters of the strike were held for conspiracy and as accessories. Peace reigned again in Beldendale, the peace of inaction, business stagnation, and commercial prostration.

CHAPTER XIV.

DAWNING OF A BETTER DAY.

As health and strength gradually returned to Mr. Belden, Mr. Duncan gleaned from him, by short and not overtaxing conversations, the history of the strike and the causes that led to it. He was familiar with the newspaper history, not always truthful, from want of the exact knowledge of the secret motives leading to the outward acts and results, and too often based on statements colored by the prejudices of parties from whom information was obtained.

"So this whole difficulty, with its terrible consequences, may be traced to one source that may be fully stated in the words, *want of confi-*

dence," remarked Mr. Duncan at the close of their last conversation.

"Yes, that is the sum of it."

"And this want of confidence might, you think, have been removed and overcome if such a statement of your affairs could have been made to your employés as would have satisfied at least a majority of them of the honesty of your motives in asking them to submit to the reduction in wages?"

"Probably."

"And you had not the courage to meet their demands?"

"It was not a question of courage, but rather of policy. You know what Hamlet said when meditating suicide, 'Whether 'tis better to bear the ills we have, than fly to others we know not of;' and so with me, the question was, whether 'twere better to face a strike than an injured credit that such a revelation would then have brought upon me. Between

these horns of the dilemma I had to choose, and I chose the first. The result is, you know, that I saved my credit. On 'change I am regarded safe, but it was at the sacrifice of the esteem of my employés, almost my own life, and the lives of others. I was between the millstones, and they ground exceeding fine."

"What an insatiable Moloch this 'mammon of unrighteousness,' this juggernaut of our modern civilization, is. In its maw, and beneath its ponderous wheels, its victims writhe and perish," meditatingly answered Mr. Duncan. "Certainly, there must be a better way of solving these problems than that through which you have just passed."

"If there is I should rejoice to find it," replied Mr. Belden.

"The laws of contract, the right of employers to employ whom they please, to conduct their business as they deem best, to own and transfer

property without hindrance, must of necessity ever remain as they now are. An abridgment of these rights, except for crime committed or for the public good, would be in violation of one of the cardinal doctrines of our great charter of personal rights. The right to own property and to enjoy the fruits of one's toil and enterprise is as sacred as the right of personal liberty. Indeed, it is part of it, and ownership implies the right of free use and disposal in every way not inconsistent with the rights of others. We hear men speak of the rights of capital and the rights of labor, as though they were distinct and severable. This is not a truth, and never can be. Capital is as much dependent upon labor as labor is upon capital; neither can exist without the other. They are inseparable, and each best serves the other when moving in harmony. The best results to each, then, seem

to me to be attainable along the lines of moral conduct rather than by appeals to legislation, for legislation in the particular interest of either is of necessity class legislation, and is usually detrimental to the public good. In recent years I, perhaps, have given more thought to these subjects. I have had the time, the leisure, to study and investigate that I did not have when actively engaged in business, and I believe I have found a solution."

"If you have a theory, pray let me have it; it may be worth a trial."

"The solution to which I refer is not a theory," resumed Mr. Duncan. "I dislike theories. By them men navigate the air, explore the ocean depths, and travel to the poles, but not one of these theories has ever been demonstrated practically. No, I dislike theories; there is always a cog out or a screw loose somewhere.

They are the *ignes fatui* of the brain that lure men to destruction in vain attempts at demonstration. The aeronaut risks the dizzy heights, the deep-sea diver is crushed in his encasing armor, the voyager perishes amid perpetual ice and snows. No, the solution is not a theory, but a demonstrated fact, and is now in successful operation in some of the largest manufacturing establishments on the continent, and is being adopted by many others, and always with the most satisfactory results."

Mr. Duncan then proceeded with great minuteness to describe to Mr. Belden his interview with M. Beauchereau and the practical working of the profit-sharing system in his extensive works, as he had seen it on the occasion of his visit to France.

Mr. Belden was an intensely interested listener to all that Mr. Duncan said. His recent experience had al-

most driven him to the abandonment of his works and to seek other investments where he should not be compelled to endure the harassing cares of constant watchfulness to prevent a waste of material by the carelessness of his workmen that greatly contracted the profits of his business, and the dread of possible strikes on slight pretexts and at most inopportune times. But in the narrative of Mr. Duncan he thought he could see a gleam of light, a star to guide through the labyrinth of difficulties that seemed to hedge him about.

"What you say is certainly worthy of an honest trial. I had despaired of ever again attempting a business involving the employment of many workmen, but if they can be enlisted in such an enterprise as this you describe, I feel that the ultimate results cannot be other than satisfactory."

"Were I a younger man I would

try the experiment; you are young and can do it. It seems to me that our workingmen need something to stimulate them and make their labor more educational. They follow their tasks too much as the ox in the tread-mill. There is nothing in their employment to cultivate their faculties of carefulness, nothing to stimulate to increased gains; nothing, in fact, to call out the latent intellectual powers; nothing but the day-after-day physical exertion: and it has indeed been a wonder to me that they have maintained the moral status they have. But I see we are permitting our interest in this subject to outrun our better judgment. You are exhausted and need rest, so we will talk further of this matter at another time."

"When I have sufficiently recovered strength I shall certainly try the experiment," replied Mr. Belden; and leaning back upon the pillows of his

invalid chair he closed his eyes in the endeavor to seek repose and recuperation from the exertion of their conversation.

Mr. Duncan remained a few moments until the regular breathing of the invalid told him that he slept, then quietly withdrew from the room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BETTER WAY.

SPRINGTIME came at last, and with its bursting buds, springing grasses, and blooming flowers, came renewed health and strength to the proprietor of the works at Beldendale. He longed again for the activities of business life, and as he walked about the deserted mills, with their smokeless stacks, rusted rolls, and silent engines, he matured his plans, and, in imagination, pictured the vast structure throbbing again with a new life of productive vigor. In furtherance of his plans, he had printed and distributed the following :

"TO MY OLD EMPLOYÉS AND OTHER WORKINGMEN:

"I invite you to a conference on Monday, April 30, at two o'clock P. M., at my mills. All who desire work are cordially invited to be present.

"JOHN BELDEN."

The posting of this notice about the village was the gossip of the town. That John Belden was willing to confer with his old employés, and emphasized his willingness by taking the initiative step to that end, was accepted as a good omen of better days for Beldendale. The workmen who had remained in the village wrote to those who had gone elsewhere, and as the day of meeting drew nigh, many of them returned, and all were anxious to know the probable result of their being called together. At length the hour appointed arrived. A suitable place had been selected in the mills, and rough seats constructed for the convenience of all who might come.

John Belden was among the first to arrive, and as his late antagonists filed into the mills, he assured them of his continued confidence by a hearty shake of the hand and a kind word of welcome that touched a responsive chord in many a stout heart beating beneath a rough coat.

When all were seated, Mr. Belden arose and said :

" My friends, for I feel that I can call you such, I have invited you to meet me to-day to talk over and consider your own and my best interests. I should have sought this conference long since, but my health and strength were not sufficient for the task. It has been a source of gratification to me that, aside from a very few of your number, through all of our late estrangement, your conduct toward me has not been offensive, and I am happy to know that the only hand in Beldendale that was raised to strike me was not an em-

ployé of mine or a workingman. Since last September these mills have been idle. The reason for this need not now be mentioned, except to say that there was a want of confidence between us as employer and employés; and because I could not re-establish that confidence by an exhibition of my private affairs (a revelation of which at that time I deemed hazardous to both my interests and yours) there came this long-continued strike. But that time is now happily past. In the future, I propose that the business of managing the affairs of these works shall be conducted on an entirely new basis, that of profit-sharing. I propose that each of you shall have in his confidence every business transaction, if he so desires; that each of you shall, in a sense, become a partner in the conducting of the business. I shall not here go into details of the plans I shall propose, but shall, in due time, submit to a committee of your

number a full statement of the methods I shall propose, so that you may at your leisure examine them; and by conferences we can probably agree upon some basis of trial of the new scheme."

This short address appeared to meet the approval of those present, and from their number they selected a committee to receive from Mr. Belden his proposals, and for conference.

Michael Durant was unanimously chosen chairman of this committee, and Mr. Belden was duly notified that they were ready to receive from him, and consider, such proposals as he might desire to make. Promptly he submitted to them the following:

"Beldendale, May 5, 18—.

"GENTLEMEN:—I submit to you for your consideration and approval the following propositions as the basis upon which my works shall resume operation, viz.:

"First—Wages shall be paid to each employé upon the basis of the scale now existing and paid in other works for the manufacture of like products, less ten per cent. This reduction is asked for the reason that the works have been so long idle that time is necessary to regain our trade and put the mills in proper running condition. Wages to be paid semi-monthly.

"Second—That at the expiration of six months, or bi-yearly, the reduction of ten per cent shall be paid to each employé who remains in my employ, out of any surplus of profit there may be after deducting taxes and the ordinary repair and wage accounts of the works.

"Third—That the absolute management and control of the works shall remain in me, and for my superintendency I shall receive an annual salary equal to that paid in any similar plant of like capacity, out of the profits of the concern, say $3,000, payable quarterly.

"Fourth—That upon the capital invested ($400,000) I shall be allowed

an annual interest of five per cent, payable semi-annually.

"Fifth—That after deducting full wage and salary account, repair account, and interest and tax accounts, any surplus of profit remaining at the expiration of each six months shall be divided into three parts, and distributed as follows: one-third (but in no event to exceed twenty per cent of the capital invested) to be retained to meet possible losses in the business, such as bad debts, etc.; one-third to be distributed to you as operatives, and to clerks, bookkeepers, and other employés, on the basis of your respective wages and salaries; and the remaining third to me as the owner of the works and superintendent.

"Sixth—To entitle any employé to participation in the distribution of profits, he must have remained continuously in my employ for the six months immediately preceding the distribution, sickness or accident alone excusing.

"Seventh—For your protection as well as my own, against imposition, a committee of one from each depart-

ment, chosen by the workmen thereof, and one chosen by myself, shall constitute a board of supervision, and shall hear and determine all complaints made to them or that shall come within their observation touching the faithfulness and efficiency of any employé, with power to discharge; also the power to elect and fill all vacancies in each of the departments; always reserving to myself the right to hear and determine any and all cases upon review, upon application.

"Eighth—That a committee of one person from each department shall be chosen, to whom, at all proper times, shall be submitted the books, accounts, and business transactions of the works for their inspection and examination, so that all may be fully informed as to their rights in the profits in the business.

"Personally, I assume all responsibility of losses. I ask of none of you a contribution, except that of your diligence, carefulness, and strict application to your employment, remembering that as you faithfully apply yourselves the more probable will

your reward be in the enlarged profits of these works. If these propositions meet your approval they will be prepared in duplicate and signed by each operative and myself, to be binding for one year. We must remember, however, that this is largely experimental, that while it has proved successful in most of the cases where given an honest and faithful trial, yet, with us it may fail unless we take the step with a full determination that one and all will honestly bear his full share of the burdens,

"Yours respectfully,

"JOHN BELDEN."

After careful consideration by the committee, and submission to the workmen, with their favorable recommendation, the proposition was accepted, but not without many misgivings on the part of some. The papers drawn and duly signed, all was in readiness for the new experiment of associated labor and capital. The fires were lighted in furnace and beneath boiler, the smoke curled up-

ward from the many chimneys once more, the wheels of engines and lathes again revolved, the sound of clanking machinery and the hum of industry filled the valley, and echoed from hill to hill; the workmen came and went from their daily toil as of old, but with a new inspiration. Never in the history of the works was there such production, so little waste of material, such care and thought, so great a volume of trade. Beldendale was indeed at peace, the peace of busy industry, of widening commerce.

The first six months passed, then the second. The balanced ledgers were a wonderful revelation. Wages paid in full, interest on capital paid, salaries and repair accounts canceled, and a surplus for distribution to the wage-earner of ten per cent; so that he whose average wages were five hundred dollars received a bonus of fifty dollars, and he whose wages

reached a thousand, received one hundred.*

By unanimous consent of all concerned, at the expiration of the year, the new system was continued, and all with one accord and with renewed vigor, stimulated with the experience of the past, entered upon the labor of the second year, determined, if possible, to make a better showing of the advantages of profit-sharing.

"And what shall we do with Assembly No. 10?" queried Michael Durant of Mr. Belden, as he went his rounds as superintendent.

"The usefulness of Assembly No. 10 under our present system is certainly a thing of the past, but organization, in my judgment, is still a necessity," replied Mr. Belden. "But that organization must be

* This is not a fancy sketch; it is rather under than above the percentage distributed by many employers who have adopted the system of profit-sharing.

such as will include in its membership all interested in the successful operation of the works, one in which *I* as the *owner* can be a member as well as *you*, an *operator*. We have no secrets now that need be kept from each other, but as laborers together, we should freely interchange views and consider our joint interests."

"The suggestion is certainly a good one," Michael replied. "The mill is not a convenient place, at least during work hours, for such a purpose."

"And then there are other matters, more of a social nature, that should receive our attention," continued Mr. Belden. "We dwell here as a community, and while our homes should always be the chief centres for our evening and off-hour entertainment, yet there are not a few who are not so favorably situated as you and I, and who have no homes

other than their boarding-houses, and some place should be provided suitable for their entertainment, where the moral and elevating influences should predominate, such as reading-rooms, etc. Any association that shall have for its end such purposes shall have my hearty co-operation."

"I shall talk to the men about this," replied Michael. "I am sure such an association would meet with general approval."

"And in addition to the objects I have already mentioned," Mr. Belden resumed, "a society of the nature of a Building and Loan Association might be organized. These houses you are now occupying as tenants, and for which you are paying me rent, might just as well be yours, and the money you now pay could be applied on purchase money, and in a few years you would own the title in fee. I can assure you

such an investment of your savings is more secure than bank deposits."

And so together Mr. Belden and the men worked and planned along the lines of their common interests.

* * * * * *

Five years passed, and Mr. and Mrs. Duncan again visited Beldendale. The mellowings of a happy old age were creeping into their lives, the fruitage of a life well spent in following the teachings of their old friend and pastor, Dr. Matoon, long since gathered to his fathers, but whose life still lived in his counsels. Mr. Belden was still in the prime of vigorous manhood, standing on the summit of life's path, from whose heights he could look back through the mist of years upon the way, not always one of ease, but always straightforward, with a confidence born of a life of integrity and uprightness

"Well, John, give me the results

of your experiments in profit-sharing," remarked Mr. Duncan.

"Come and see; shall we ride or walk?"

"Why, walk, of course; I am feeling quite young to-day; besides, I want to look into your works more closely than I could by riding."

So, arm in arm, they went the rounds, father and son, counselor and friend. As they walked through the mills they were greeted with pleasant smiles and nods by every one. Mr. Duncan, with the eye and interest of the old-time manufacturer, noted the many improvements in machinery and devices for handling the heavy products, but that which gave him the greatest pleasure was the cheerfulness and activity of all the workmen and their interest in their work.

"You certainly have an extraordinary corps of employés," he remarked.

"Oh, you forget, under the present régime these are not employés; they are my fellow-workmen, you know, and are just as interested in these works and their output as I am; sometimes I think more so," laughingly remarked Mr. Belden. "But come, it is rather noisy here for conversation. Let us seek a quieter but I trust not a less interesting part of the plant;" and taking Mr. Duncan by the arm he led him from the mills out and along the village street.

"How neat and tidy all your tenant houses are!" remarked Mr. Duncan, as they sauntered along admiring the taste displayed in the designing and painting of the cottages and plotting of the grounds.

"These are not mine; they belong to that horde of capitalists down in the mills. I once owned them, but they bought me out, and many of the old shacks have been torn down that

once disfigured the ground, and these new and more modern cottages have taken their places," Mr. Belden answered.

"But I am more interested in *how* this was all brought about," continued Mr. Duncan.

"Through the operation of our Building and Loan Association," replied Mr. Belden.

By this time they had reached the main business thoroughfare of the village and stood before one of the most imposing buildings of the thriving town.

"Come in, Mr. Duncan, I wish to show you the Assembly Hall."

"Do the men still maintain their Knights of Labor organization?"

"No, but we have a substitute, an organization of which I am proud to be a member, in which all matters pertaining to the business of the works are fully considered; and I have found many of the suggestions

made at our meetings very helpful in conducting our business. A place of meeting was found very necessary, and so from surplus funds in our reserve we erected this building, with store-rooms underneath, from the rent of which a fair interest is realized on the investment. And in addition to our hall for holding our meetings, we have a library, reading-room, and bath-rooms connected, as you will see as we ascend the stairway and go through the building. And, Mr. Duncan, aside from all money considerations, this investment has paid from a moral standpoint. The effect in this respect upon the men has been wonderful. It has given them a place of resort, kept them from evil associations, particularly the saloon, and everyone takes a special pride in the building."

As the two friends talked they walked through the rooms, viewing their various appointments.

"This, you say, was built from surplus funds in your reserve. This fund was always in my mind the doubtful one in the scheme," remarked Mr. Duncan.

"Only twice have we had occasion to draw on this fund for extraordinary purposes, and as the surplus was for investment, we agreed that a part of it should be invested in the erection of this building. Of course, such reverses may come that it may be exhausted, but 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' Our profits have been so much in excess of the old slipshod methods that we have felt that we could risk this much for our betterment. The men are contented and happy; strikes and lockouts are things of the past. The shiftless, intemperate, and careless have been gradually weeded out by the changes of time, and I feel assured that, for Beldendale at least, unless there are some extraordinary

reverses, there are in store years of prosperity. But let us return home, as it is now near the dinner hour."

As they descended the broad stairway, and stepped out upon the busy street, Mr. Duncan stopped a moment and looked about him in deep meditation; then turning to John Belden, and clasping his hand, said:

"Truly, the Lord has made the wrath of man to praise him, and out of the deep waters of your affliction he has brought about this — THE BETTER WAY."

THE END.

NEW CASTLE, PA., Aug. 11, 1894.

J. M. MARTIN, ESQ. :

I herewith return the MS. of your fine story, "Which Way, Sirs, the Better?"

As a tale, permit me to say it is exceedingly well told; it excites a deep interest at once and goes straight to the point without wearying with needless details and confusing circumlocution. In its main purpose it goes to the heart of one of the great issues of the times, and, it seems to me, proposes the only natural solution of this unnatural conflict between capital and labor. I say this after years of study given to the subject. I could wish that six million men now so vitally interested in this subject in our country might have the opportunity of reading it. It ought to be on every news-stand and railroad train at once.

Very truly yours,

REV. I. A. THAYER, D. D.,

Pastor of the Disciple's Church, New Castle.

NEW WILMINGTON, PA., Aug. 25, 1894.

Every sincere effort made by the thoughtful and serious citizens of our beloved land to solve the social problems confronting us in these times is hailed with pleasure and gratification. These efforts may show themselves in different

ways, and are not impossible to any citizen in any rank or profession. We are not therefore surprised when capable and reputable men put in attractive and popular literary form their views in regard to the condition, methods, and prospects of our social and political system.

This has been done, with sincerity of conviction and clearness of expression, by J. M. Martin, Esq., of New Castle, Pa., in his book entitled "Which Way, Sirs, the Better?" The underlying principle of his solution of our social troubles is correct—the Golden Rule. The presentation of this in this unpretentious form and with the attractiveness of literary style sustained throughout cannot fail to instruct and entertain.

J. M. MEALY,
Pastor of Neshannock Presbyterian Church,
New Wilmington, Pa.

NEW WILMINGTON, PA., Oct. 1, 1894.

J. M. MARTIN, ESQ.:

MY DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:—I return herewith the manuscript book, "Which Way, Sirs, the Better?" which you were kind enough to lend me to read. I first submitted it to my daughter (a reader of many books), who expressed herself as very much pleased with it.

I did this because I think that any book that interests her will be of interest to the average reader. I have just finished it myself. It has given me both pleasure and profit.

I hope you will publish it, for the following reasons: In my opinion, it will sell; that is, will have many readers. It is a very pleasing story, and will appeal to the class who read mainly for recreation, and who would reject a text-book on sight. It gives a very realistic description of the operation of a manufacturing plant, and of the "conflict between capital and labor," the lives of operatives, etc., strikes, and mobs. It treats both sides fairly, I think, and presents matters in a new and conservative light. This makes it of value to the general public. Above all, it presents very clearly the wrong way; and this must be understood and realized before the better way can be inaugurated.

I am in hearty sympathy with the book, and cordially endorse it. I believe "The Better Way" you present would be greatly in advance of present methods, and I cannot say that it would not be all that you claim for it, even by implication. And I feel that you have given the method, the first steps by which the bloodless revolution must be brought about. "The Better Way" would restore confidence and harmony between capitalists and laborers, and open the way for a temperate examination of

further reforms. I most heartily wish you success in this venture.

Sincerely your friend,

C. M. MORSE,

Official Stenographer of the Mercer County Courts.

NEW CASTLE, PA., Oct. 11, 1894.

DEAR MR. MARTIN :

I have read "Which Way, Sirs, the Better?" with great interest and much profit. The narrative is true to life; all the essential features of the prevalent social and industrial unrest are wrought into the picture; the solution of these difficulties therein presented is practical, more, is in actual operation in many places, and a wide circulation of the little book through the instrumentality of the press must do immense good. All the avenues of trade ought to be strewn thick with it. I wish for it a wide and fruitful circulation.

Fraternally yours,

M. H. CALKINS,

Pastor Central Presbyterian Church.

NEW CASTLE, PA., Oct. 12, 1894.

J. M. Martin, Esq., of New Castle, Pa., has written a book entitled "Which Way, Sirs, the

Better?" that we believe only awaits publication to become popular. In reading this well written and attractive story of our times, one cannot help sympathizing in turn with the laborer and the capitalist.

The fact, though not formulated in words, is well developed in the course of the story, that there exists antagonism, not between capital and labor, but between the few unscrupulous capitalists and unreasonable laborers. The difficulties in the solution of the labor problem are fairly presented, and one by one disappear, as gradually with skilful pen is pictured "The Better Way." This book deserves a wide circulation.

Respectfully,

E. F. EDMONDS,

Pastor First M. E. Church.

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